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ABSTRACT

With heavy immigration fueled by U.S. immigration law changes in 1965 and the influx of over 700,000 Indochinese refugees since the Vietnam War ended in 1975, Asian Americans grew from 1.4 million in 1970 to 3.5 million, 1.5% of the U.S. population, by the April 1980 census and an estimated 5.1 million, 2.1% of the U.S. total, as of September 30, 1985. Barring major changes in U.S. immigration policy, they could number almost 10 million in 2000. The major Asian American groups are Chinese (21% of the total in 1985), Filipinos (20%), Japanese (15%), Vietnamese (12%), Koreans (11%), and Asian Indians (10%). In 1980, 49% of Asian Americans lived in California or Hawaii, 9% in New York, and 92% lived in metropolitan areas, compared to 75% of the general population. Except for the latest-arrived Vietnamese, the fertility of the six major groups is lower than the white average, labor force participation is generally higher and unemployment lower. In 1980, 35% of adults were college graduates, compared to 17% of white adults, and among the foreign-born, all but Koreans and Vietnamese exceeded the white population in the highest-status occupational category. Per-worker median incomes in 1979 were higher than the white median only for Japanese, Chinese, and Asian Indians, but family median incomes were as high or higher than the white median for all but Vietnamese, because Asian Americans households, especially among recent immigrants, contain more workers than white households. Asian Americans are not homogeneous and some groups still lag behind, particularly "second-wave" Indochinese refugees arriving since 1978, but with their strong family support and dedication to education and work, Asian Americans are likely to assimilate like other immigrant groups before them, especially as more of their groups are comprised of native-born Americans. (Author)

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Asian Americans: Growth, Change, and Diversity

By Robert W. Gardner, Bryant Robey, and Peter C. Smith

Abstract—With heavy immigration fueled by U.S. immigration law changes in 1965 and the influx of over 700,000 Indochinese refugees since the Vietnam War ended in 1975, Asian Americans grew from 1.4 million in 1970 to 3.5 million, 1.5 percent of the U.S. population, by the April 1980 census and an estimated 5.1 million, 2.1 percent of the U.S. total, as of September 30, 1985. Barring major changes in U.S. immigration policy, they could number almost 10 million in 2000. The major Asian American groups are Chinese (21 percent of the total in 1985), Filipinos (20 percent), Japanese (15 percent), Vietnamese (12 percent), Koreans (11 percent), and Asian Indians (10 percent). In 1980, 49 percent of Asian Americans lived in California or Hawaii, 9 percent in New York, and 92 percent lived in metropolitan areas, compared to 75 percent of the general population. Except for the latest-arrived Vietnamese, the fertility of the six major groups is lower than the white average, labor force participation is generally higher and unemployment lower. In 1980, 35 percent of adults were college graduates, compared to 17 percent of white adults, and among the foreign-born, all but Koreans and Vietnamese exceeded the white proportion in the highest-status occupational category. Per-worker median incomes in 1979 were higher than the white median only for Japanese, Chinese, and Asian Indians, but family median incomes were as high or higher than the white median for all but Vietnamese, because Asian American households, especially among recent immigrants, contain more workers than white households. Asian Americans are not homogeneous and some groups still lag behind, particularly "second-wave" Indochinese refugees arriving since 1978, but with their strong family support and dedication to education and work, Asian Americans are likely to assimilate like other immigrant groups before them, especially as more of their groups are comprised of native-born Americans.

Editor: Jean van der Tak Graphics: George Hager

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Asian Americans: Growth, Change, and Diversity

By Robert W. Gardner, Bryant Robey, and Peter C. Smith

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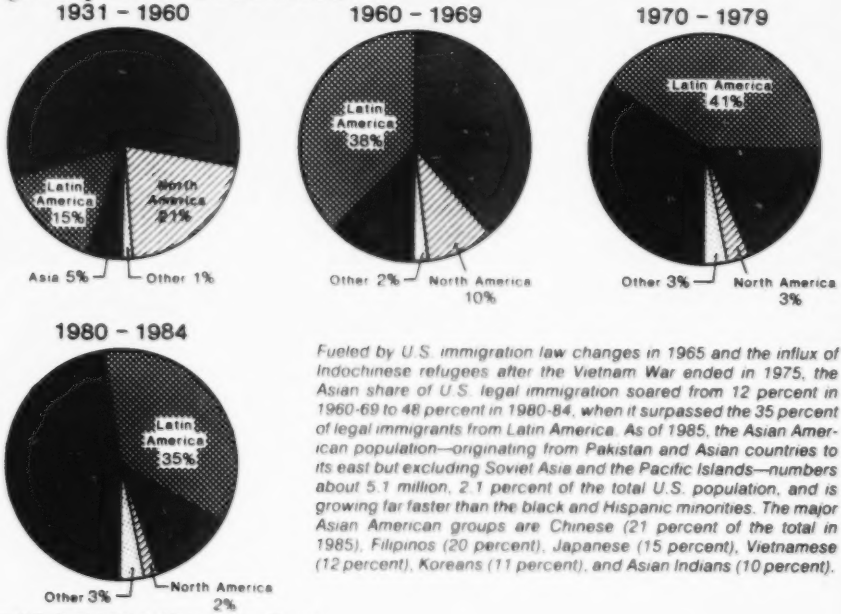
Figure 1. Legal Immigrants Admitted to the United States, by Region of Birth: 1931-1984



Source: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service

Fueled by U.S. immigration law changes in 1965 and the influx of Indochinese refugees after the Vietnam War ended in 1975, the Asian share of U.S. legal immigration soared from 12 percent in 1960-69 to 48 percent in 1980-84, when it surpassed the 35 percent of legal immigrants from Latin America. As of 1985, the Asian American population—originating from Pakistan and Asian countries to its east but excluding Soviet Asia and the Pacific Islands—numbers about 5.1 million, 2.1 percent of the total U.S. population, and is growing far faster than the black and Hispanic minorities. The major Asian American groups are Chinese (21 percent of the total in 1985), Filipinos (20 percent), Japanese (15 percent), Vietnamese (12 percent), Koreans (11 percent), and Asian Indians (10 percent).

Asian Americans: Growth, Change, and Diversity

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Bryant Robey is Director of Public Affairs for the East-West Center of Honolulu and a member of the Center's Population Institute. He holds degrees from Amherst College and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He was the founding editor of American Demographics *and is the author of many articles on demographics and of the just-published book,* The American People: A Timely Exploration of a Changing America and the Important New Demographic Trends Around Us *(E.P. Dutton).*

Peter Smith is a Research Associate at the East-West Population Institute and holds the Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Chicago. His research specialties include Asian demography, marriage and the family, geographic and social mobility, and the labor force. His most recent book is Migration of Women to Cities: The Asian Situation in Comparative Perspective *(with Siew-Ean Khoo and James T. Fawcett).*

The authors specially thank Michael Levin of the Bureau of the Census, coauthor with Robert Gardner, Peter Smith, and Herbert Barringer of a forthcoming 1980 census monograph on Asian and Pacific Americans, for preparing and providing many of the special tabulations used in this Bulletin. *They also thank Shanta Danaraj, Macrina Abenoja, Gerald Platt, Ruth Sahara, and Shawn Uesigi for their help and recognize their Population Institute colleagues Fred Arnold and James Fawcett for their research on Asian immigration, which is reflected in this* Bulletin.

The 1980 U.S. census counted 3.5 million Asian Americans, up from 1.4 million in 1970. Asian Americans made up just 1.5 percent of the total U.S. population of 226.5 million as of April 1, 1980, but this was the third largest racial or ethnic minority after blacks (26.5 million and 11.7 percent of the total) and Hispanics (14.6 million, 6.4 percent of the total). Asians increased far more during the 1970s (141 percent) than blacks (17 percent) or Hispanics (39 percent), although Hispanics added the most numbers of the three minorities.

Taking into account natural increase (births minus deaths) and continuing immigration, especially of refugees from Southeast Asia, we estimate the Asian American population at 5.1 million as of September 30, 1985, about 2.1 percent of the some 239 million total U.S. population as of this date. The gain of nearly 50 percent in the five and a half years since the 1980 census reaffirms Asian Americans' status as currently the U.S.'s fastest growing minority. Barring substantial changes in U.S. immigration law, Asian Americans could total 9.9 million by the year 2000 and approach 4 percent of the U.S. population.

These new residents are having an impact on this country that far exceeds their numbers, yet Americans know surprisingly little about them. As a group, Asian Americans do not resemble other racial or ethnic minorities. Less well known is the fact that Asian Americans vary widely in their characteristics according to their cultural origins and when they arrived in the U.S.

Asia is a vast region that contains over

half the world's population. China alone has more than four times the U.S. population. The rich variety of peoples in Asia, fluctuating U.S. immigration policies, and this country's changing relations with Asia have combined to shape the characteristics of today's Asian Americans.

Successive waves of immigrants have come to the U.S. from Asia for more than a century, beginning with the Chinese and Japanese. More recently, people from the Philippines, India, and Korea have come in growing numbers. Waves of refugees from Indochina, especially Vietnam, followed the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. From 1931 to 1960, Asians accounted for only 5 percent of immigrants legally admitted to the U.S., just one-third the 15 percent of immigrants from Latin America, and far below the 58 percent of immigrants still coming from Europe (Figure 1, page 2). With changes in the immigration law in 1965, the proportion of legal immigrants from Asia grew to 34 percent by 1970-79, still below the 41 percent from Latin America. By 1980-84, however, the share of Asian immigrants, 48 percent, exceeded legal immigrants from Latin America, 35 percent, and far outstripped the share from Europe, shrunk to just 12 percent.

Though this nation was settled largely from the countries of Europe, now, as the balance shifts, an America that historically has looked across the Atlantic finds itself looking across the Pacific as well. America's future is likely to be increasingly Asian.

This *Bulletin* examines the characteristics of Asian Americans, how their numbers have grown, where they live, how different groups vary in age structure, childbearing, health, and longevity. It reports on the kinds of households Asian Americans form and how they fare with regard to education, occupation, and income.

Once looked down upon as poorly educated, blue-collar "Orientals," Asian Americans are now often perceived as a "model minority." It is true that Asian Americans as a whole are better educated, occupy higher rungs on the occupational ladder, and earn more than the general U.S. population and even white Americans. But the broad averages mask great disparities; many recent arrivals, particularly refugees from Indochina, come ill-equipped for life in America and fare far less well than other Asians.

This *Bulletin* presents the first comprehensive look at many important facts about Asian Americans and how the groups differ, made possible by special tabulations of data gathered in the 1980 census.* This permits more detailed analysis than possible with published data from the 1980 census, which often include Pacific Islanders with Asians, making the broad averages less accurate. The 1980 census data are the latest available to give a true picture at the national level of Asian Americans and the various groups among them. Media stories and surveys by researchers can provide only fragments of evidence. Also, the numbers of Asian Americans in the different groups are relatively still too small to yield statistically reliable data from national surveys conducted by the Census Bureau between censuses, such as the monthly Current Population Survey. We believe our 1980 information is still valid for most of the Asian American population, including new arrivals since the census. One exception is for Vietnamese and other Indochinese refugees, whose numbers have increased dramatically since the census was taken on April 1, 1980. For these latest refugees, whose characteristics may well be different from those of refugees counted in the census, we provide information from recent special surveys.

The *Bulletin* begins with a look at the current numbers of Asian Americans and how this population is defined.

* These tabulations form the basis for a monograph on Asian Americans by two of the authors of this *Bulletin*, Robert Gardner and Peter Smith, plus Herbert Barringer (University of Hawaii) and Michael Levin (Bureau of the Census), to be published in 1986 in a series of special monographs on results of the 1980 census, sponsored by the Social Science Research Council.

Table 1. Asian American Population: 1980 Census and Estimates for September 30, 1985

	April 1, 1980, census				Estimates for September 30, 1985			
Rank	Ethnic group	Number	Percent	Percent foreign-born of group	Ethnic group	Number	Percent	Percent increase in number Apr. 1, 1980-Sept. 30, 1985
	Total	3,466,421	100.0	—	Total	5,147,900	100.0	48.5
1	Chinese	812,178	23.4	63.3	Chinese	1,079,400	21.0	32.9
2	Filipino	781,894	22.6	66.3	Filipino	1,051,600	20.4	34.5
3	Japanese	716,331	20.7	28.4	Japanese	766,300	14.9	7.0
4	Asian Indian	387,223	11.2	70.4	Vietnamese	634,200	12.3	158.8
5	Korean	357,393	10.3	81.8	Korean	542,400	10.5	51.8
6	Vietnamese	245,025	7.1	90.5	Asian Indian	525,600	10.2	35.7
	Other Asian	166,377	4.8	—	Laotian	218,400	4.2	358.0
	Laotian	47,683	1.4	—	Kampuchean	160,800	3.1	902.2
	Thai	45,279	1.3	—	All other	169,200	3.3	64.8
	Kampuchean	16,044	0.5	—				
	Pakistani	15,792	0.5	—	Percent of total U.S. population (239,447,000) = 2.1 percent			
	Indonesian	9,618	0.3	—				
	Hmong	5,204	0.2	—				
	All other[a]	26,757	0.8	—				
	Percent of total U.S. population (226,545,805) = 1.5 percent							

Sources: 1980: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-S1-12, *Asian and Pacific Islander Population by State*, December 1983, Table B. 1985: Estimates by *Bulletin* authors.

[a]Includes Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Bornean, Burmese, Celebesian, Cernan, Indochinese, Iwo-Jiman, Javanese, Malayan, Maldivian, Nepali, Okinawan, Sikkimese, Singaporean, Sri Lankan, and Asian not specified (e.g., "Asian").

Current Numbers and Definition

For our purposes, Asia includes Pakistan and the countries lying east of it in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, but not Soviet Asia or the Pacific Islands. Asian Americans include immigrants and refugees from these countries and the U.S.-born descendants of earlier arrivals living in the U.S., plus students, businessmen, and their families from these countries whose "usual" residence is the U.S. at the time of the census (which is conducted on a *de facto* basis). Excluded are visitors and others from Asia who are temporarily in the U.S.

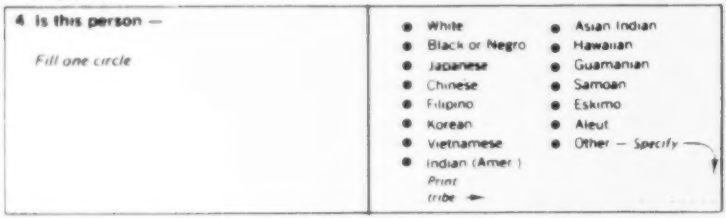
In this *Bulletin* the focus is on the six largest Asian American groups—Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Asian Indians, Koreans, and Vietnamese. Combined, they accounted for over 95 percent of the 3.5 million Asian Americans counted in the 1980 census. Their numbers were: Chinese, 812,000; Filipinos, 782,000; Japanese, 716,000; Asian Indians, 387,000; Koreans, 357,000; and Vietnamese, 245,000 (Table 1). Twenty-two smaller Asian groups were reported in the census, of which the largest were: Laotian, 47,700; Thai, 45,300; Kampuchean (Cambodian), 16,000; and Pakistani, 15,800.

The proportion of foreign-born (immigrant) Asian Americans in the six largest groups was only 28 percent for Japanese but about two-thirds for Chinese (63 percent) and Filipinos (66 percent) and higher still for the other three groups (Table 1).

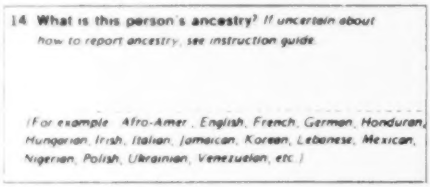
Using data on immigration and refugee flows along with calculations of natural increase since the census date of April 1, 1980, we have estimated the Asian American population as of September 30, 1985 (Table 1). These estimates—the most current available—indicate that this population increased by over 1.6 million in these five and a half years, from

Figure 2. The Race and Ancestry Questions in the 1980 Census

Race question



Ancestry question


14 What is this person's ancestry? If uncertain about how to report ancestry, see instruction guide.
(For example, Afro-Amer., English, French, German, Honduran, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Jamaican, Korean, Lebanese, Mexican, Nigerian, Polish, Ukrainian, Venezuelan, etc.)

Instructions to the respondent for ancestry question

> 14. Print the ancestry group with which the person *identifies*. Ancestry (or origin or descent) may be viewed as the nationality group, the lineage, or the country in which the person or the person's parents or ancestors were born before their arrival in the United States. Persons who are of more than one origin and who cannot identify with a single group should print their multiple ancestry (for example, German-Irish).

just under 3.5 million to almost 5.2 million—an annual growth rate of over 7 percent. This is slightly less than the Asian American growth rate of almost 8.8 percent per year during the 1970s, but it is far higher than the annual growth rate of 1.1 percent for the total U.S. population since the 1980 census. Between April 1, 1980, and September 30, 1985, the proportion of Asian Americans in the total U.S. population increased from a little over 1.5 percent to 2.1 percent.

No Asian group in the U.S. numbered more than a million in 1980. By September 30, 1985, both Chinese and Filipinos exceeded a million. The Chinese were still in first place with 1,079,400, but likely soon to be overtaken by Filipinos, with an estimated 1,051,600 as of this date and a faster growth rate. Vietnamese increased by over 150 percent in these five and a half years, from 245,025 to 634,200, and Koreans by over 50 percent, from 357,393 to an estimated 542,400.

Definition

How do we determine who is Asian? There is no scientific category based on biologic stock. The Census Bureau's concept of race reflects self-identification by respondents to the census questionnaire. In 1980 the race question, appearing as number 4 on the "short" questionnaire distributed to all households, listed six Asian groups among possible answers—Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, and Asian Indian—plus an "other" category for other possible Asian responses (Figure 2).

This may seem a straightforward way to define the Asian American population but in practice it is not. Census data on race based on self-identification are subject to changing attitudes about race; the same individual could report his or her

race differently on successive censuses. Moreover, census procedures do not allow a person to be counted as belonging to a mixed race, and the census gives us no information on how many individuals indicated they were of mixed race.

The number of Asian categories provided for on the census form has changed over the years, primarily reflecting growing populations for the different groups. In 1970 data on Asian Indians were included in the "white" category, while Vietnamese and many other Asian groups were put in a general "other" race classification. Such changes influence the number of Asian American responses to the census race question and limit our knowledge of Asian American growth and characteristics over time.

For the first time in 1980, the Census Bureau also asked a question on ancestry, as item 14 on the "long" questionnaire distributed to a 19 percent sample of all households (Figure 2). This provides an additional perspective on who should be considered Asian American. Here the Bureau *did* accept and tabulate multiple responses, so that the total number of Asians measured by ancestry is greater than the total identified by race. For example, the sample questionnaire indicated over 894,000 persons of Chinese ancestry, whereas only 812,200 Chinese were identified as being of Chinese race from answers to question 4 in the 100 percent questionnaire. These differences reflect individuals' own identification with an ethnic origin, which may be different from their view of "race" or the country where they were born. The ancestry question is open-ended; the race question is not. (For example, 22,330 persons identified from the ancestry question as ethnic Chinese placed themselves in the Vietnamese category in answers to the "race" question, presumably because they were born in Vietnam.) After taking these differences into consideration, there seems to be a good correspondence between the concepts of Asian race and Asian ancestry. Published census tabulations use the concept of race, and that is the one we rely on for this *Bulletin*.

How the Numbers Grew

Between the censuses of 1970 and 1980, a decade in which the total U.S. population increased by only 11 percent, the Asian American population soared by 141 percent. Some Asian groups grew much faster than that. This dramatic increase took many people by surprise, but it should not have. It was a direct result of changes in U.S. immigration law enacted in 1965, plus admission of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos following the downfall of Saigon in April 1975. Although the trend was new, the immigrant influx—if not that of refugees—fit historic patterns.

The growth of the Asian American population is intimately linked with the history of immigration policy for Asians. This policy has moved in sudden starts and stops along with changes in social attitudes and the U.S. economy, plus unforeseen events like the U.S. defeat in Vietnam. The desire of U.S. employers for cheap labor often has vied with the animosity of "nativists" toward Asian immigrants who were so unlike the dominant European-origin population.

Successive waves of Asian immigrants from different countries have influenced the relative size of different Asian groups throughout this century. In 1900, for example, Chinese were 58 percent and Japanese 42 percent of Asians counted in the census and were virtually the only Asians in the country (Table 2, page 8). By 1920 the share of Chinese had dropped to 26 percent, Japanese stood at 66 percent, and Filipinos had increased from zero to 8 percent. At the time of the 1980 census, Japanese had dropped to only 21 percent, while Filipinos had risen almost equal to the Chinese, at 23 percent (Table 1). Asian Indians were 11 percent in 1980, Koreans 10 percent, and Vietnamese 7 percent—

Table 2. Total U.S. and Asian American Population: 1900-1980

(Numbers enumerated at census dates)

Census year	Total U.S.	Total Asian	Japanese	Chinese	Filipino[a]	Korean	Asian Indian	Vietnamese
1900	76,212,168	204,462[b]	85,716	118,746	—	—	—	—
1910	92,228,531	249,926[b]	152,745	94,414	2,767	5,008	—	—
1920	106,021,568	332,432[b]	220,596	85,202	26,634	6,181	—	—
1930	123,202,660	489,326[b]	278,743	102,159	108,424	8,332	—	—
1940	132,165,129	489,984[b]	285,115	106,334	98,535	8,568	—	—
1950	151,325,798	599,091[b]	326,379	150,005	122,707	7,030[c]	—	—
1960	179,323,175	877,934[b]	464,332	237,292	176,310	—	—	—
1970	203,211,926	1,429,562[b]	591,290	436,062	343,060	69,150[d]	—	—
1980	226,545,805	3,466,421[e]	716,331	812,178	781,894	357,393	387,223	245,025

Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-B1, *General Population Characteristics*, May 1983, Table 40, and various census volumes for the years shown.

[a]Included with "other races" for the U.S. in 1900 and for Alaska in 1920 and 1950.

[b]Total only of Asian groups listed for this year.

[c]Data for Hawaii only.

[d]Excludes Koreans in Alaska.

[e]Includes 166,377 other Asian Americans, listed separately in *Bulletin* Table 1. Data for 1980 in this table are from a sample and do not exactly agree with 1980 census data for Asian population published in the above-cited Census Bureau volume from the 100 percent tabulations, which were: Japanese, 700,794; Chinese, 806,040; Filipino, 774,652; Korean, 354,593; Asian Indian, 361,531; Vietnamese, 261,729.

groups with almost no representation in the U.S. before the 1960s.

The history of Asian Americans begins essentially with the arrival after 1849 of Chinese recruited to work in California, the beginning of a large influx touched off by the gold rush. The number grew rapidly, with thousands working on construction of the transcontinental railroads in the 1860s. Agitation against the Chinese appeared and grew during the 1870s, especially in California where they became victims of special taxes, rioting, and an anti-Chinese law, passed in 1879. In 1882 Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which essentially banned immigration of Chinese into the U.S.

One result of the anti-Chinese sentiment was the substitution of Japanese workers for Chinese. The 1900 census counted close to 86,000 Japanese, along with some 119,000 Chinese. These totals for the first time included Hawaii, which was annexed in 1898, increasing the Asian population of the U.S. by 87,000.

By the 1910 census, the number of Chinese had actually declined to 94,000. This census counted 5,000 Koreans, but the Korean government had ended emigration in 1905 and the number of Koreans did not rise much above this figure until the 1960s. In 1985 Koreans in the U.S. number over half a million (Table 1)—evidence of the important impact recent immigration policies have had on the growth of America's Asian population.

In 1906, 160 Filipinos were recruited for work in the Hawaiian sugar plantations. The U.S. had annexed the Philippines in 1898 and until 1934, Filipinos were allowed to move freely into the country as U.S. nationals. By 1930 they numbered 108,000—more than the 102,000 Chinese. Filipino immigration dropped to a trickle during the depression of the 1930s and the next two decades, but picked up rapidly with the 1965 immigration law change. Since 1960 more immigrants have arrived from the Philippines than from any other country except Mexico,[1] and by 1985, as noted, Filipinos had almost displaced Chinese as the largest Asian American group.

Strict immigration laws of the 1920s virtually halted Asian immigration into the U.S. The 1924 National Origins Act, designed mainly to reduce immigration from South and East Europe in favor of Northwestern Europeans, also set a quota for

Asians at virtually zero. By 1943 the quota had risen only to 105 for Chinese.

Immigration from all sources was low during the depression of the 1930s. In 1940, as in 1930, the census counted about 490,000 Asian Americans. By 1960 the number had risen to 878,000, partly due to some easing of Asian immigration permitted with the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952. With the baby boom of the 1950s the U.S. population was growing rapidly, so the growing number of Asians among the total population attracted no attention.

Then immigration policy was liberalized in 1965 and Asian immigration skyrocketed. The 1965 law, taking effect in 1968, abolished the national origins quota system in favor of one giving preference to family members of persons already in the U.S. and workers with skills needed in the U.S. For the Eastern hemisphere (which includes Asia), the annual quota was set at 170,000, with no more than 20,000 from any one country. The Western hemisphere overall quota was 120,000, with no country restriction until an amendment of 1976 when the 20,000 annual per-country limit also applied. Currently, the worldwide annual quota for legal immigrants is 270,000, with 20,000 from any one country. Also admitted beyond this numerical limitation are spouses, parents, and unmarried children under age 21 of U.S. citizens, plus refugees. By 1981, with soaring numbers of refugee admissions, some 60 percent of Asian immigrants admitted to the U.S. came outside the numerical limitation, in contrast, for example, to 52 percent of immigrants from Europe and 28 percent of those from South America.[2] Further, by 1981, most Asians counted as immigrants were not newly arrived in Los Angeles' LAX Airport or New York's Kennedy Airport, but persons already in the U.S. who had come earlier either as refugees or as tourists, businesspeople, or students with nonimmigrant visas and had their status adjusted to permanent resident (immigrant) status without leaving the country.

Between April and December of 1975, the U.S. admitted the first great wave of Indochinese refugees in the aftermath of

Indochinese refugees learn about American ways. Over 700,000 Southeast Asian refugees have arrived in the U.S. since the end of the Vietnam War in April 1975.

defeat in the Vietnam War—some 130,400 altogether, with 125,000 from Vietnam itself.[3] The number dropped to 17,000 over the next two years. Then from 1978 it surged again as hundreds of thousands of "boat people" fled from Vietnam and Cambodians (Kampucheans) and Laotians escaped overland and the U.S. agreed to accept first 7,000 and then 14,000 refugees a month to relieve desperate conditions in refugee camps. This second wave peaked in fiscal year 1980 (October 1, 1979–September 30, 1980) with the arrival of 166,700 Indochinese refugees, 95,200 from Vietnam. These and later Indochinese refugees were admitted under the Refugee Act of 1980, which took effect April 1, 1980, the same day as the census, and thus most were not counted in the 1980 census. By the end of September 1984, some 711,000 Southeast Asian refugees had arrived in the U.S. since April 1975 and they represented almost one Asian American in seven.[4]

Since 1981 the number of Indochinese refugees admitted annually has not quite equaled the quotas set under the Refugee Act, which have ranged from 168,000 in fiscal year 1981 down to 50,000 in fiscal

year 1985. By the end of May 1985, the number of refugees still awaiting resettlement from camps in Southeast Asia was down to 155,000.[5] However, immigration from Indochina is likely to continue at substantial levels. Under the Orderly Departure Program agreed to by the U.S. and Vietnam in 1980, several thousand Vietnamese a year are eligible to enter the U.S. as immigrants, in addition to refugees. Also, more and more Indochinese refugees are obtaining U.S. citizenship, for which they are eligible after five years in the U.S. if they have meanwhile adjusted to permanent resident status, which they may do after one year. Like other new U.S. citizens among recent Asian immigrants, they are quickly following up on their right to bring in immediate relatives who do not count in the 20,000 per-country annual immigrant quotas, as well as other close relatives high on the preference list for numerically limited immigrants.

As the number of Asian immigrants soared after 1965, U.S. fertility began to subside after the baby-boom years of 1947-1964. Immigration from Europe also dropped as low fertility rates there removed sources of potential immigrants. These trends virtually guaranteed that Asian Americans would increase their share and visibility in the U.S. population.

In 1965 only 20,700 Asians (from all countries of Asia) were admitted to the U.S., compared to 114,000 Europeans. In fiscal year 1984 (ending September 30, 1984), according to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Europeans admitted as immigrants had dropped to 64,000, while the number for Asians was up to 256,300.[6]

Between 1960 and 1970, the combined growth rate for Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos in the U.S. was 4.5 percent a year, higher than for any other intercensal decade since the turn of the century. In the next decade, from 1970 to 1980, the average growth rate for Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Koreans rose to over 6 percent. Recent growth has been high for all six major Asian groups except the Japanese. Japanese are not immigrating to the U.S. in large numbers today, while immigration is high from the Philippines, Korea, India, China (including the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong), and, of course, Vietnam. Some 43 percent of Asians in the six major groups who were counted in the 1980 census said they had immigrated into this country since 1970. Immigration has been a driving force behind the increase in the size of the Asian American population and, barring new restrictive immigration legislation, this trend is likely to continue.

Table 3. Total U.S. and Asian American Population, by Region: 1980

(Percent distribution)

Population	Region			
	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Total U.S.	21.7	26.0	33.3	19.1
Total Asian[a]	17.1	12.3	14.2	56.4
Japanese	6.5	6.5	6.6	80.3
Chinese	26.8	9.2	11.3	52.7
Filipino	9.9	10.4	11.0	68.8
Korean	19.1	18.1	19.9	42.9
Asian Indian	34.2	23.1	23.4	19.2
Vietnamese	9.0	13.4	31.4	46.2

Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-B1, *General Population Characteristics*, Table 53, and PC80-S1-12, *Asian and Pacific Islander Population by State*, Tables 1 and 4.

[a]Includes all Asian Americans; not just those listed separately.

Where Asian Americans Live

Asian Americans are far more concentrated geographically than the general U.S. population. The 1980 census found 56 percent of Asian Americans living in the West (which includes Hawaii), compared with just 17 percent of all Americans, and only 14 percent of Asian Americans in the South, versus 33 percent of all Americans (Table 3).

These regional patterns, however, vary among the different groups. Japanese and Filipinos are especially concentrated in the West, and more than half of Chinese Americans also live there, but

only one in five Asian Indians. Only 17 percent of all Asian Americans live in the Northeast, but 27 percent of Chinese and 34 percent of Asian Indians, compared with 22 percent of all Americans. Koreans, although 43 percent live in the West, are distributed most similarly to the total population. Vietnamese, found in relatively large numbers in the South (especially Texas, Louisiana, and Virginia), are more widely distributed than the other five major Asian American groups because the aim of the refugee resettlement program has been to disperse refugees about the country in an effort to speed their assimilation and lessen the impact on American communities of large groups arriving at one time. The largest share, however, were settled in California and many refugees have later moved there to be with relatives and friends.

Asian Americans are even more clustered in just a few states. At the time of the 1980 census, nearly 59 percent lived in California, Hawaii, and New York, and only four other states had 100,000 or more—Illinois, Texas, New Jersey, and Washington (Table 4). California is the first-ranking state for both Asian Americans and Americans in general but in 1980, 36 percent of Asian Americans lived there, compared to 10 percent of the total U.S. population. The difference was even greater in Hawaii, with 13 percent of Asian Americans but only 0.4 percent of all Americans counted in 1980. Nearly half the population of Hawaii is Asian. California, the state with the next highest proportion of Asian Americans in its population, is just 5.3 percent Asian.

Except for Asian Indians, California has the highest proportion among the six largest Asian American groups, especially for Filipinos (46 percent) and Chinese (40 percent). Nine percent of all Asian Americans live in New York, but twice that proportion of Chinese and Asian Indians. Japanese are most heavily concentrated in Hawaii, with twice the representation of Filipinos and almost five times that of Chinese.

While Asian Americans are still heavily

Table 4. Seven States with 100,000 or More Asian Americans in 1980

(Population numbers in thousands)

Area	Total U.S. population	Total Asian[a]	Japanese	Chinese	Filipino	Korean	Asian Indian	Vietnamese
United States	226,546	3,466	716	812	782	357	387	245
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
California	23,668	1,247	269	326	358	103	60	85
Percent	10.4	36.0	37.5	40.1	45.8	28.7	15.4	34.8
Hawaii	965	453	240	56	132	17	1	3
Percent	0.4	13.1	33.5	6.9	16.9	4.9	0.2	1.4
New York	17,558	328	25	147	36	33	68	6
Percent	7.8	9.4	3.5	18.1	4.6	9.3	17.5	2.4
Illinois	11,427	171	18	29	44	24	37	6
Percent	5.0	4.9	2.6	3.6	5.7	6.8	9.7	2.6
Texas	14,229	130	12	27	16	14	23	28
Percent	6.3	3.7	1.7	3.3	2.0	3.9	6.0	11.3
New Jersey	7,365	108	10	23	24	13	31	3
Percent	3.3	3.1	1.4	2.9	3.1	3.7	7.9	1.2
Washington	4,132	105	27	18	26	13	4	9
Percent	1.8	3.0	3.8	2.2	3.3	3.8	1.1	3.6

Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-B1, *General Population Characteristics*, Table 124, and PC80-S1-12, *Asian and Pacific Islander Population by State*, Table 4.

[a]Includes all Asian Americans; not just those listed separately.

concentrated in the West, the 1970s brought their distribution among the country's four regions closer to that of the population in general. For the U.S. population as a whole, the proportions living in the Northeast and Midwest fell from 1970 to 1980 and rose in the South and West. For Asian Americans, the share living in the West fell to below 60 percent, while the share for all other regions rose. The South was the biggest proportionate gainer.

These changes were due primarily to internal migration and especially to settlement patterns of new immigrants. Over 90 percent of the growth of the Asian American population in the West and South was due to immigration from out of the country and less than 10 percent to net internal migration. The Northeast and Midwest actually lost Asian Americans through net internal migration but gained overall because of the large influx of newly arriving immigrants. The largest streams of Asian Americans moving between regions during the 1970s were toward the West, but internal migration had more impact in the South because its initial Asian American population was so much smaller than that of the West.

Urban dwellers

Asian Americans are far more metropolitan than Americans as a whole. In 1980, 92 percent in the six major groups were living in standard metropolitan statistical areas, with the proportion close to 96 percent in the Northeast, 93 percent in the West, and 89 percent in the Midwest and South.[7] For the total population, the proportions were 75 percent overall, 85 percent in the Northeast, 83 percent in the West, 71 percent in the Midwest, and 67 percent in the South. Among the different Asian American groups, Japanese are the least metropolitan, at 89 percent, and Chinese the most, at 96 percent.

Just four metropolitan areas, however, had 50,000 Asians of any one ethnicity in 1980. There were more than 50,000 Chinese in all four—San Francisco, Honolulu, New York, and Los Angeles—and similar concentrations of Japanese in Honolulu and Los Angeles, Filipinos in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Honolulu, and Koreans in Los Angeles.[8]

One reason Asian Americans are so metropolitan is that so many are recent immigrants. Immigrants traditionally flock to cities; later generations are distributed more evenly. This pattern is likely to be repeated with Asian Americans as immigrants make up smaller and smaller proportions of their populations.

Age and Sex Composition

Immigration and different immigration histories are also strongly reflected in the age and sex composition of the Asian American population, which differs from that of the general U.S. population and among the different Asian groups.

Age differences

In 1980 the median age—the point which divides a population into older and younger halves—was 30 for the U.S. population as a whole (Table 5). The median age was much higher than this for Japanese Americans (33.5), almost the same for Asian Indians (30.1) and Chinese (29.6), and lower for Filipinos (28.5) and Koreans (26.0) and especially Vietnamese (21.5). For comparison, the median age in 1980 for white Americans was 31.3, for blacks, 24.9, and for Hispanics, 23.2.

The Japanese median age is high because of low fertility and high life expectancy, but also because the Japanese population is not much affected by recent high levels of immigration. The low median age for Vietnamese primarily reflects their recent arrival in America, since young people are more likely than older people to migrate. Although the Chinese and Asian Indians have median ages close to that of the general population, their age structures are quite different because they have different his-

Table 5. Median Ages of U.S., White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American Populations: 1980

Population	Median age		
	Total	Male	Female
Total U.S.	30.0	28.8	31.2
White	31.3	30.0	32.5
Black	24.9	23.5	26.1
Hispanic	23.2	22.6	23.8
Japanese	33.5	31.0	35.9
Chinese	29.6	29.4	29.8
Filipino	28.5	27.7	29.1
Korean	26.0	23.3	27.1
Asian Indian	30.1	30.2	30.1
Vietnamese	21.5	20.6	22.7

Sources: Asian Americans: Bureau of the Census, special tabulations of the Asian American population counted in the 1980 census, 1984, unpublished. All other: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-B1, *General Population Characteristics*, Table 41.

tories of births, deaths, and especially immigration.

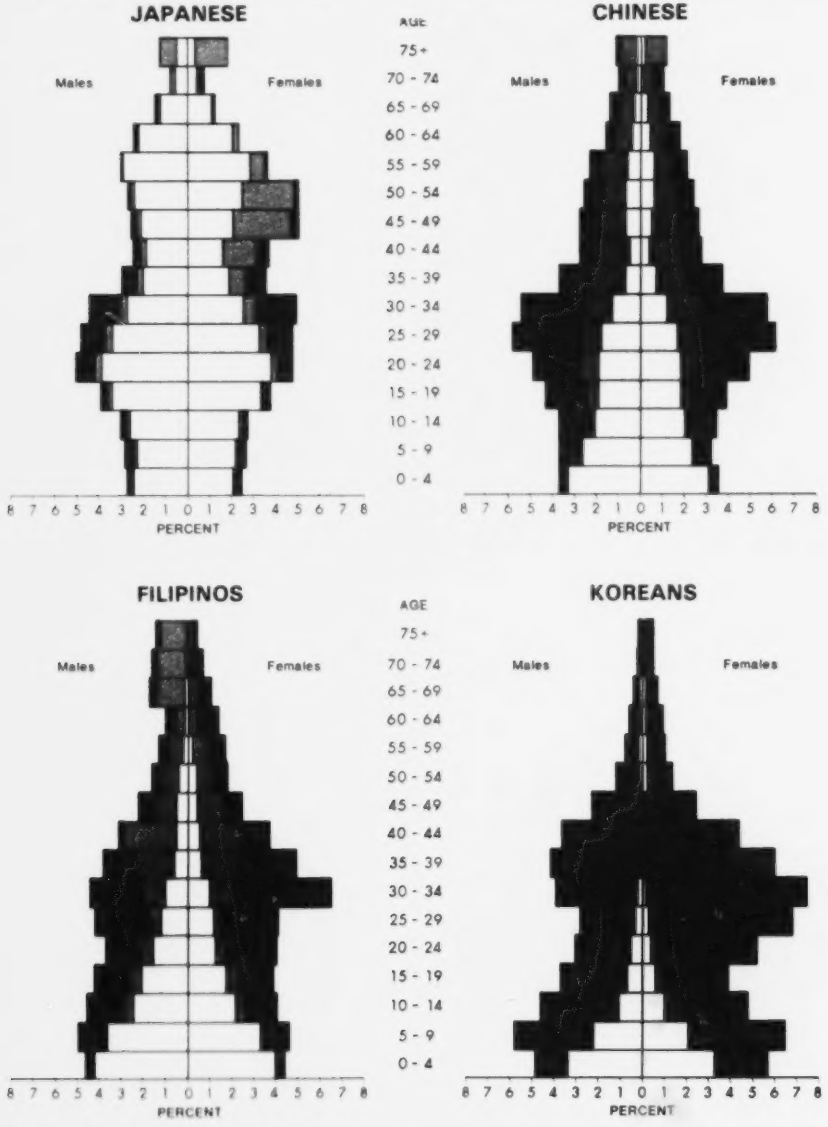
These age structure differences are graphically illustrated in the age-sex population pyramids shown in Figure 3 (pages 14-15). The pyramid for the U.S. population as a whole in 1980 is shaped most by fertility and little by immigration. The low-fertility years of the 1930s account for the relatively small group of people aged 40-49 in 1980. The waxing and waning of the baby boom, which peaked from 1955 to 1964, is evident in the bulge at ages 15-24 and the constriction at younger ages. In contrast, the relatively greater numbers of Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos in the oldest age groups reflect the immigrants from these countries earlier in the century who are now reaching the end of their lifespans. The high proportion of Vietnamese under age 25 reflects the waves of young refugees since 1975. America has virtually no older Vietnamese because almost no Vietnamese immigrated to the U.S. before the 1970s.

The pyramids for the six major Asian groups are divided into three parts which help reveal the factors behind these age structure differences: the native-born (white core of each pyramid); immigrants arriving before 1970 (lighter part of the red colored areas); and immigrants arriving from 1970 to 1980 (darker colored areas). The distinction between native-born and immigrants shows that almost all Vietnamese in the U.S. are immigrants, while relatively few Japanese Americans alive in 1980 came to this country as immigrants. The two-part shading in the immigrant portion of the pyramids highlights the importance of the 1965 legislation that opened the door to Asian immigration. Through the door have come thousands of Asians in their twenties and thirties. The white bars at the youngest ages include the U.S.-born children of these post-1965 immigrants.

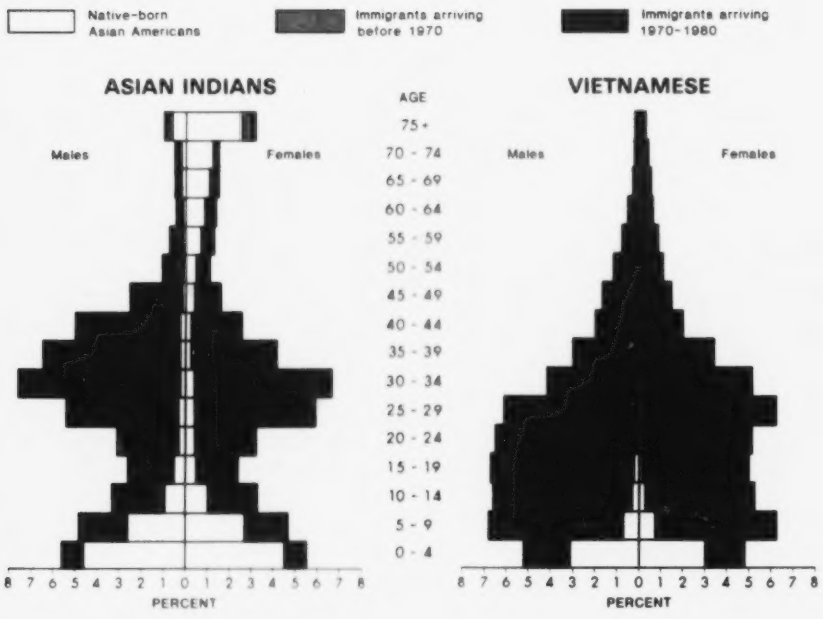
The native-born populations of Japanese, and Chinese to a lesser degree, are comprised of the children of two "waves" of immigration. Each pyramid has notable native-born populations both at older ages (descendants of the earliest immigrants) and younger ages (the children of post-World War II immigrants). However, the Chinese, but not the Japanese, have come in large numbers since 1965. This, combined with fairly low births per woman in both groups, has resulted in a rising number of native-born children ages zero to 14 among Chinese but a falling number for Japanese Americans.

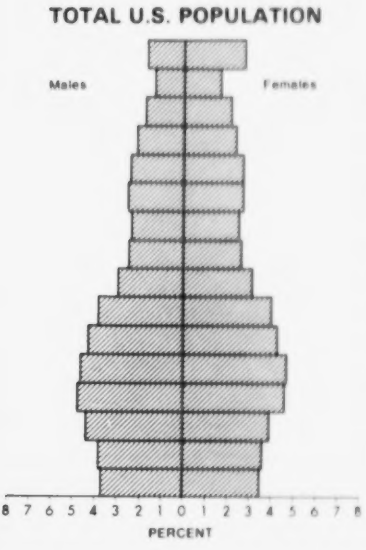
Filipinos and Koreans have also come in two waves, before and after World War II, but their pyramids show little bulge in the native-born at older ages. This is because most of the early Filipino immigrants were unaccompanied males who never married (see the male bulge for early Filipino immigrants at the top of the pyramid). For the Koreans, the pyramid shows—as already noted—that the pre-World War II immigrants were few. Asian Indian and Vietnamese native-born populations are distributed as might be expected of groups with heavy recent immigration which has included relatively large numbers of adults in the childbearing ages, that is, wide bars of children in the youngest ages. (The apparent large numbers of older native-born Asian

Figure 3. Age-Sex Composition of the Six Major Asian American Groups, by Period of Immigration, and Total U.S. Population: 1980



Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-B1, *General Population Characteristics*, Table 45, and special unpublished tabulations of the Asian American population.





Indian females are the product of an error in the census, we suspect.)

Among the foreign-born, Japanese show the highest proportions of pre-1970 immigrants, clustered at the older ages. Chinese and Filipinos show the effects of their long immigration histories, but with much more evidence of 1970-80 immigration. Pyramids for Koreans and Asian Indians show aging groups of pre-1970 immigrants, heavily female among Koreans and heavily male among Asian Indians.

Koreans and Asian Indians also show high proportions of 1970-80 immigrants but the Vietnamese pyramid is most dominated by the effects of recent immigration. The pyramids of these three groups will be shaped by heavy recent immigration for a long time. But eventually, even if immigration continues at high levels, their pyramids will come to resemble those of the Chinese and Filipinos, with greater proportions of earlier immigrants and native-born.

The large numbers of Vietnamese in or about to enter the prime childbearing ages of the twenties and early thirties portend a large number of Vietnamese births in the near future and a rapid increase in the number of Vietnamese Americans, especially since the birth rate of Vietnamese women is relatively high, as noted later. In addition to the Vietnamese, the broad bases of their pyramids suggest that the number of U.S.-born Filipinos, Koreans, and Asian Indians should grow more rapidly than will native-born Japanese or Chinese.

The Japanese age structure may pose problems for Japanese families in the future. When the relatively small numbers of Japanese Americans who were children and teenagers in 1980 grow older, they may have to support a much larger number of elderly Japanese who were aged 20-34 in 1980. This problem mirrors that of the total U.S. population when the baby-boom generation retires. Moreover, the relationships of native-born children and their elders are not always smooth because of the clash of cultures. Here the situation of Vietnamese is probably the extreme. There may be turbulent times ahead for the families of America's newest Asian arrivals.

Sex differences

In 1980, in the U.S. population as a whole, the median age was higher for females (31.2) than for males (28.8), reflecting the fact that in most populations, women live longer than men (Table 5, page 13). This pattern was true also for the major Asian American groups, except Asian Indians, where the median ages were virtually equal at 30.1 for females and 30.2 for males. However, the female-male differences in median age were 35.9 to 31.0 among Japanese Americans and 27.1 to 23.3 among Korean Americans—gaps much greater than for the U.S. population as a whole in 1980 and in Japan and Korea today. This could be because many of the older Japanese and Korean immigrants now in the U.S. came as wives of American men who served in the armed forces in Asia during and after World War II and the Korean War of 1950-53.

Female-dominant immigration also explains why these two groups have much lower numbers of males per 100 females than the U.S. average. In 1980 the male-female sex ratio was 84.5 for Japanese Americans and 71.5 for Koreans, compared to 94.5 for the U.S. population as a whole. On the other hand, male-dominant immigration, especially in the ten years before the 1980 census, was reflected in the unusual sex ratios of Asian American groups that were above 100: 107.2 for Asian Indians and 107.6 for Vietnamese.

Immigration can have startling effects on the sex ratio of a population. In 1900 the sex ratio for Chinese in the U.S. was 1,385 males per 100 females because Chinese immigration had been so heavily male in the preceding 50 years. Among Filipinos, the sex ratio was still 123.4 in 1970, a lingering result of heavy male immigration early in the century. By 1980, however, many of these elderly single male Filipinos had died and the sex ratio had fallen below 100. As with age structure, sex ratios of Asian Americans will continue to change in the future in response to immigration patterns.

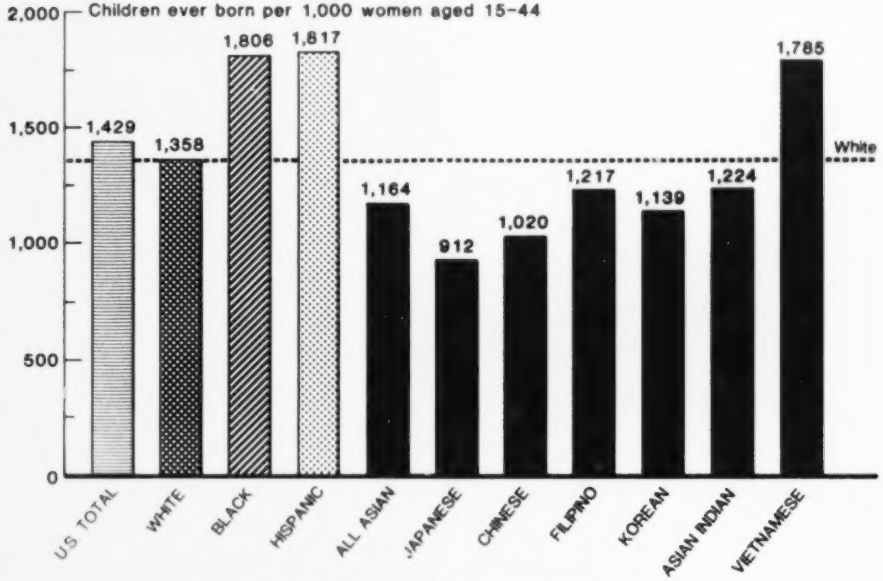
Fertility

Currently it is difficult to calculate the more common fertility rates for Asian Americans because race is defined differently by the registration system which records births and the Census Bureau which counts numbers of women in the childbearing ages. However, some clues on fertility can be gleaned from the census question on the number of children ever born asked of female respondents, which automatically classifies each reported child by the race of the mother.

In contrast to Hispanics, America's other large minority with many recent immigrants, the fertility of most Asian Americans is not high by current American standards. In 1980 the average

Figure 4. Children Ever Born per 1,000 U.S., White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American Women Aged 15-44: 1980

(Age-standardized rates[a])



Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-C1, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, March 1984, Tables 84 and 131, and special unpublished tabulations of the Asian American population.

[a]These rates are standardized on the age distribution of all Asian American women in 1980 so that comparisons are not affected by differences in age composition among the different populations.

number of children ever born for all Asian American women aged 15-44 was 1,164 per 1,000 women (Figure 4). This was lower than the figures for women of all races, 1,429, and for whites, 1,358, and far lower than the figures of 1,806 for blacks and 1,817 for Hispanics. (These figures are age-standardized. See note at the bottom of Figure 4.)

Among Asian Americans, the figure was highest for Vietnamese, 1,785, which was close to the figures for Hispanic and black women. All other groups were much lower and below the figures for both U.S. women as a whole and white women: somewhat above 1,200 children per 1,000 women aged 15-44 among Asian Indians and Filipinos, 1,139 for Koreans, 1,020 for Chinese, and just 912 for Japanese American women.

One important factor in explaining differential fertility is place of birth. In the past among ethnic minorities in the U.S., the fertility of the native- or U.S.-born who have become assimilated has tended to resemble that of the white majority and has been lower than that of foreign-born immigrants in these groups.[9] Recent immigrants bring with them the values and behavior of the cultures they left behind, including traditional preferences for large families which are typical in some countries of origin, such as the Philippines and Vietnam, though not Japan. Migrants, however, may have lower fertility than those left behind. Also, a recent study of Indochinese refugees in San Diego county, California, revealed lower fertility among the highly educated, urbanized, and often professional refu-

Table 6. Fertility of U.S. and Asian American Women Aged 25-34, by Nativity and Education: 1980

(Children ever born per 1,000 women)

Mothers' characteristics	Total U.S.	Total Asian[a]	Japanese	Chinese	Filipino	Korean	Asian Indian	Vietnamese
Total	1,476	1,201	908	939	1,270	1,244	1,336	1,775
Nativity								
Native-born	—	951	768	669	1,520	996	1,343	1,608
Foreign-born	—	1,268	1,104	1,024	1,227	1,252	1,336	1,777
Years of schooling								
Less than 9	2,348	2,030	1,119	1,766	1,839	1,246	2,233	2,543
9-12	1,764	1,509	1,342	1,318	1,723	1,288	1,574	1,834
13-16	1,106	992	807	763	1,144	1,186	1,293	1,033
17 or more	620	726	466	538	801	903	1,055	847

Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-D1-A, *Detailed Population Characteristics*, March 1984, Table 271, PC80-1-C1, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Tables 84 and 131, and special unpublished tabulations of the Asian American population.

[a]Includes all Asian Americans; not just those listed separately.

gees who arrived in the first wave of 1975-77 than among the much more rural farmers and fisherfolk who came in the second refugee wave, generally too late to be counted in the April 1, 1980, census.[10]

Some of these differences are evident in the 1980 census data in Table 6 on children ever born per 1,000 women in the prime childbearing ages of 25-34. The average for the native-born among Asian Americans as a whole, 951, is much lower than the average for the foreign-born, 1,268. The differential is in the same direction for all the major Asian American groups except Filipinos and Asian Indians. Nevertheless, among all groups except Vietnamese, the figures for the foreign-born are still below the figure for all U.S. women, 1,476, and for white women aged 25-34, which was 1,404.

Table 6 also shows fertility by mother's education, another important factor associated with fertility differentials. Typically, the higher a woman's education, the lower her fertility. In 1980 the average number of children per 1,000 U.S. women aged 25-34 with more than four years of college (17 or more years of schooling) was just 620 compared to the average of 2,348 for women with less than nine years of education. Among Asian Americans, only Japanese and Koreans at lower levels of education show any deviation from this usual pattern.

What of future trends in Asian American fertility? The 1980 census data indicate that for all but the most recently arrived group, the Vietnamese, fertility is already below the level for white Americans, but some differences remain among the different groups even after controlling for nativity (whether or not born in the U.S.) and education. These differences might be expected to persist according to unique economic circumstances and cultural values, such as Filipino Catholicism, which might mean slightly higher fertility for Filipinos than other Asian Americans. But all groups should have relatively low fertility because of the continued striving for upward mobility and success that characterizes Asian Americans. This should be true eventually also for the Vietnamese as they become established and assimilated and immigrants make up a smaller proportion of the total Vietnamese population—a proportion that was 91 percent among Vietnamese counted in the 1980 census (see Table 1, page 5). The San Diego study of Indochinese refugees found that fertility did become lower when socioeconomic adaptation was greater; refugees with the highest family income had the lowest fertility since arriving in the U.S.

Mortality and Health

Reliable national data on the health and mortality of Asian Americans as a whole are difficult to obtain because of problems of relating vital statistics and census data with different rules for defining race and because the groups are still too small to yield statistically reliable data in national sample surveys. But evidence from specialized surveys indicates that Asian Americans' health and mortality levels rapidly approach those of the general population as the groups assimilate and that life expectancy for the long-established Japanese and Chinese is higher than for white Americans.

Life expectancy

A long series of data from Hawaii, where Asians now comprise nearly half the population, shows that in 1920, Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos had lower life expectancy than whites, but Japanese and Chinese life expectancy surpassed that of whites by 1940, an achievement also recorded for Filipinos, though not till 1980 (Table 7). In 1980 life expectancy at birth was highest for Chinese in Hawaii, 80.2 years, followed by Japanese, 79.7, Filipinos, 78.8, and whites, 76.4.

In 1960 in California, Japanese life expectancy was estimated to be 77.9 years, slightly higher than in Hawaii in 1960, 75.7, and also higher than for Chinese and whites (Table 7). Centered also on 1960, a classic study of differential mortality by University of Chicago demographers Evelyn Kitagawa and Philip Hauser—the only truly national study of mortality to include data on Asian Americans—also found life expectancy highest for Japanese—77.4 years for males and females combined, versus 71.2 for whites (Table 7). Among males, the figures were 74 for Japanese versus 68 for whites, and among females, 80 for Japanese and 75 for whites. Kitagawa and Hauser remarked of their study: "Perhaps the most striking finding is the very low mortality of the Japanese,"[11] which was about one-third below that of whites at all ages. Among Chinese, male mortality for ages over five was 10 percent above that of whites, but for females it was about 9 percent lower. (Chinese numbers in 1960 were too small to make other comparisons.) Using 1980 data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), researchers at the University of Illinois have also found unadjusted age-specific death rates for Japanese and Chinese lower than those for whites at all ages, with Japanese rates generally also lower than those of Chinese.[12]

Table 7. Life Expectancy at Birth of Whites, Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos: Hawaii, 1920-1980; California and U.S., 1960

(Combined sexes)

Year	White	Japanese	Chinese	Filipino
		Hawaii		
1920	56.5	50.5	53.8	28.1
1930	61.9	60.1	60.1	46.1
1940	64.0	66.3	65.3	56.9
1950	69.2	72.6	69.7	69.1
1960	72.8	75.7	74.1	71.5
1970	73.2	77.4	76.1	72.6
1980	76.4	79.7	80.2	78.8
		California		
1960	71.3[a]	77.9[a]	72.9[a]	—
		United States		
1960	71.2[a]	77.4[a]	—	—

Sources: Hawaii: Robert W. Gardner, "Life Tables by Ethnic Group for Hawaii, 1980," *Research and Statistics Reports*, No. 43 (Honolulu: Hawaii State Department of Health, 1984). California: H. H. Hechter and N. O. Borhani, "Longevity in Racial Groups Differs," *California's Health*, Vol. 22, No. 15 (February 1965) pp. 121-122. United States: Evelyn M. Kitagawa and Philip M. Hauser, *Differential Mortality in the United States: A Study in Socioeconomic Epidemiology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973).

[a]Simple average of male and female expectancies.

Infant mortality and health

The latest NCHS data on infant mortality, for 1982, show Japanese at the extremely low rate of 4.6 deaths under one year of age per 1,000 live births, Filipinos at 5.8, and Chinese at 6.1—all far below

the mortality rate for white infants in 1982, 10.1, and for the total population, 11.5.[13] These figures could be somewhat misleading; several studies have shown that Asian American and Native American (Indian) infant mortality tends to be understated because of problems with classification by race. A study of California data for 1965-67, for example, found Japanese infant mortality rates 22 percent higher after adjustment for classification errors and higher than the rates for white infants.[14] Chinese rates also rose with adjustment, but remained lower than the white rates.

Asian Americans also do well on indicators of infant health. In 1982 the percentage of babies weighing less than 2,500 grams (about 5.5 pounds) at birth—a low birth weight frequently associated with health problems—was 5.3 percent for Chinese newborns, which was below the averages for whites, 5.6 percent, and for all births, 6.8 percent.[15] The Japanese figure, 6.2 percent, was also lower than the national average and the Filipino figure was almost the same at 6.9 percent. A summary measure of a baby's physical condition five minutes after birth (the Apgar score) showed Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino newborns all with better scores than whites in 1982.

Reasons for mortality differentials

Kitagawa and Hauser and many other researchers have found that economic status is a major factor in determining mortality levels. Japanese and Chinese per capita incomes are higher than the white average, as noted later, and this is part of the reason for their lower mortality, while Filipino per capita income is somewhat lower than the white average and their mortality and health are closer to white levels. The Hawaii data also suggest that newly arrived immigrant groups starting off at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, as were Filipinos in Hawaii 60 years ago and "second-wave" Vietnamese refugees today, have relatively high mortality, but health and life expectancy improve as their economic conditions improve and more of their populations are composed of the native-born.

Other factors that influence Asian Americans' mortality are associated with assimilation. Typically, the mortality rates for different diseases recorded for Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos in the U.S. show a movement away from the levels in their countries of origin toward the levels of whites in the U.S.[16] For example, in 1959-62, the Japanese American death rate for coronary heart disease was higher than the rate in Japan but lower than the rate for whites in the U.S., while their death rate from stroke was about the same as that of white Americans and much lower than the rate in Japan.

The pattern for death rates from stroke may be due to a change in diet among Japanese Americans away from the heavy use of sodium, which is traditional in the Japanese diet and a cause for the high levels of stroke in Japan, toward a diet closer to that of the rest of Americans. Researchers Michael Marmot and Leonard Syme found in 1976 that other indicators of assimilation—use of language, ethnicity of associates, religion, etc.—were associated with a steep rise in heart disease mortality rates from low in Japan, to higher among Japanese in Hawaii, and highest among Japanese Americans in California, and also a rise between traditional and nontraditional Japanese in San Francisco.[17]

Families and Households

Economically and socially Asian Americans as a whole are faring well, but the popular notion of a highly successful "model minority" applies much more to some Asian American groups than to others. Adjustment problems can be severe and poverty is high among some of the most recent arrivals from Asia, par-

Table 8. Household Composition of White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American Populations: 1980

Household indicator	White	Black	Hispanic	Japanese	Chinese	Filipino	Korean	Asian Indian	Vietnamese
Householders by type (percent)									
Family householders, male	63.4	42.7	63.4	60.7	68.0	70.9	72.0	66.7	69.5
Family householders, female	10.1	29.8	18.1	10.1	11.1	12.3	11.2	6.4	14.2
Nonfamily householders	26.5	27.5	18.5	29.2	20.9	16.8	16.8	26.9	16.3
Household members by relationship to householder (percent)									
Householder	37.4	32.8	28.0	34.0	31.8	26.4	23.2	35.0	21.0
Spouse	23.6	13.2	17.5	27.6	21.9	21.1	26.4	23.8	16.5
Child	33.1	41.1	43.9	30.0	34.7	37.3	42.0	32.5	42.2
Other relative	3.3	9.5	7.2	4.8	7.9	11.6	6.2	6.5	14.3
Not related	2.6	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.6	2.2	2.3	6.0
Average persons per household	2.7	3.1	3.5	2.7	3.1	3.6	3.4	2.9	4.4
Children under 18 living with two parents (percent)	82.9	45.4	70.9	87.3	88.2	84.5	89.4	92.7	74.1

Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-C1, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Tables 121, 131, and 160, and special unpublished tabulations of the Asian American population.

ticularly Vietnamese refugees.

Recent immigrants of Asian origin are making the economic adjustment to life in the U.S. in part by depending on strong family support. As historian David Bell puts it: "All the various explanations of the Asian Americans' success tend to fall into one category: self-sufficiency. The first element of this self-sufficiency is family."[18] The stability of the family among Asian Americans, he says, "contributes to success in at least three ways. First, it provides a secure environment for children. Second, it pushes those children to do better than their parents. . . . And, finally, it is a significant financial advantage."

It is common within Asian American families to pool resources for housing, schooling, and other needs, particularly in the first years in the U.S. This pattern of adjustment is reflected in census data which show that the households of the most recently arrived immigrants include much higher proportions of relatives other than the householder's spouse and children than do the households of Asian Americans in general. Thus, household composition varies among the different Asian American ethnic groups according to their histories of immigration and adaptation, as well as their childbearing behavior and distinct cultural backgrounds.

Data from the 1980 census show that Japanese American households as a whole are small—identical in average size to white households at 2.7 persons (Table 8). Only 30 percent of Japanese American household members are children of the householder, compared to 33 percent for whites, and just 8.4 percent are either relatives other than the householder's spouse and children or persons unrelated to the householder—slightly higher than the 5.9 percent for white households. Chinese households are similar in their small size and simple composition, but almost 12 percent of household members are relatives outside the immediate family or persons unrelated to the householder. The households of Asian Indians are also comparatively small, 2.9 persons on average.

Korean households are somewhat larger, 3.4 persons on average, mainly because they contain more children. Filipino households are larger still; there are more relatives of the householder as well as more children. Vietnamese households are the largest at 4.4 persons on

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average. The proportion of other relatives and nonrelated persons, 20 percent, is the highest of that of any of the six major Asian American groups, and the number of children per household is high as well.

The stability of Asian American families is reflected in the 1980 census data on the proportion of households headed by females and the proportion of children living with two parents. The proportion of female-headed households is lowest among Asian Indians, just 6 percent, and highest among Vietnamese, 14 percent (Table 8). These figures range close to the proportion for white households, 10 percent, and are all below the proportion for Hispanic households, 18 percent, and far below the proportion of female-headed households among blacks, 30 percent. Also, a greater share of the children in each Asian American group lives with two parents than is true for Hispanics, blacks, or even whites. The share is below that of the white population, 83 percent, only among Vietnamese, 74 percent. For Asian Indians, the share is more than twice that of the black population, 93 compared to 45 percent. Eighty-nine percent of Korean children, 88 percent of Chinese children, and 87 percent of Japanese children live with two parents.

Figures on the proportion of all households that contain people living alone or with unrelated individuals rather than families also suggest that family fragmentation has not touched some Asian groups as much as it has whites and blacks in America. In 1980, 28 percent of black households and 27 percent of white households were nonfamily households, but this figure was only 16 percent for Vietnamese, 17 percent for Koreans and Filipinos, and 21 percent for Chinese (Table 8). The proportions were at or higher than the white and black averages for Japanese, 29 percent, and Asian Indians, 27 percent. Among Japanese this probably reflects a relatively high proportion of elderly people, many of whom live alone as widows or widowers, while for Asian Indians it may represent working-age people who have come to the U.S. without their families.

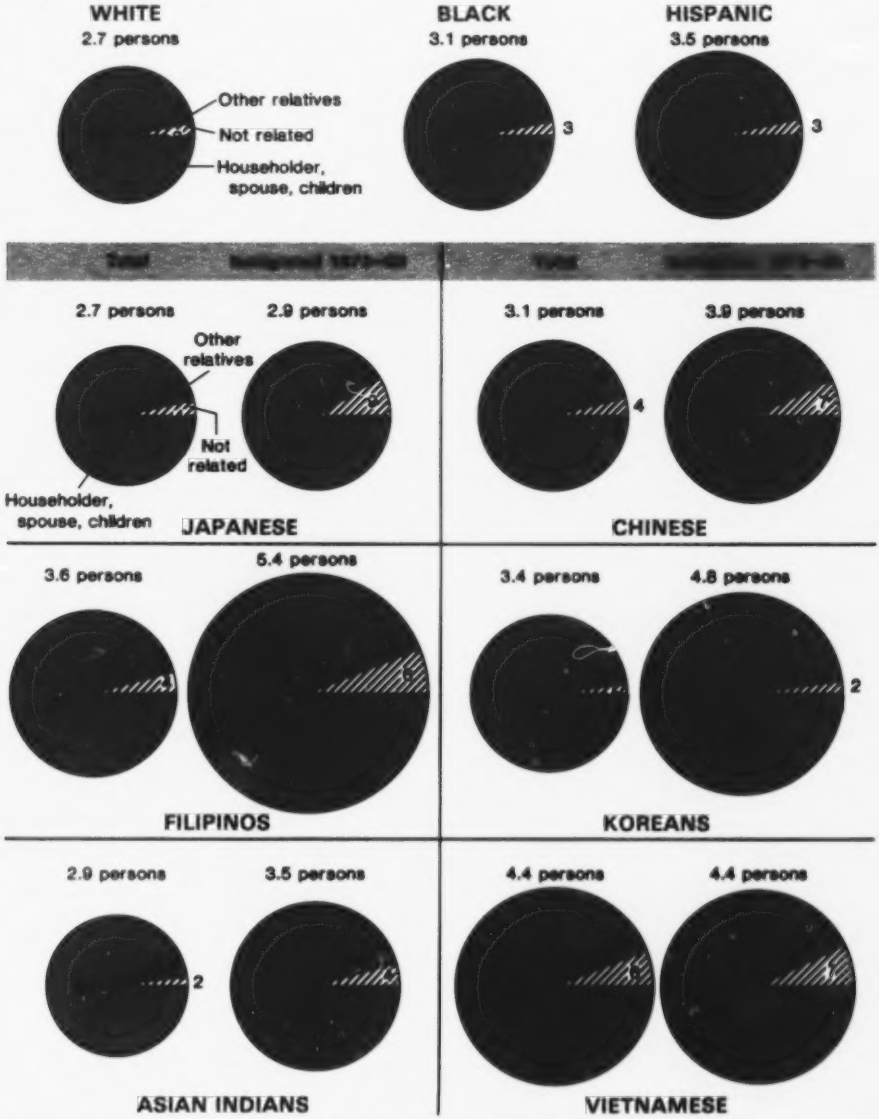
Households of recent immigrants

The household patterns of recent immigrants in the different Asian ethnic groups reflect both cultural preferences and the strategies they adopt to make the economic adjustment to life in the U.S. In all groups, the households of immigrants who came to the U.S. in the five years before the 1980 census, 1975-80, contain much higher proportions of "other relatives" than is true for the groups taken as a whole. These differences are much larger than any other differences in household composition among the six groups. They explain why the households of these recent immigrants are larger than those of the Asian American groups as a whole, except among Vietnamese (where the averages are both 4.4 persons), and often larger than the average even for Hispanic households in 1980, 3.5 persons (Figure 5). This is true even though these households are formed by young couples at such an early stage of their childbearing years that they have from one-half to nearly one full child less, on average, than Asian American households in general.

In the households of Korean immigrants arriving between 1975 and 1980, other relatives beyond the householder's immediate family made up 49 percent of household members in 1980, versus just 6 percent among Korean American households as a whole (Figure 5). The pattern was the same for all the other groups: 28 versus 5 percent for Japanese; 46 versus 8 percent for Chinese; 54 versus 12 percent for Filipinos; 41 versus 7 percent for Asian Indians; and 55 versus 14 percent for Vietnamese.

It is likely that these "other relatives," members of the householder's extended family, provide additional workers to help boost family income or cushion the loss of income if a family worker loses a job, as well as make it possible to share child

Figure 5. Household Size and Composition of White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American Total and Recent Immigrant Populations: 1980 (Numbers in percent)



Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-C1, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Tables 121 and 131, and special unpublished tabulations of the Asian American population.

Fifty-two percent of adult Asian Indians in the U.S. are college graduates.

care and the cost of rents or mortgages. Studies have shown that this has been the strategy of the latest arrivals among Koreans in Chicago, Chinese in Washington, D.C., Filipinos in Honolulu, and Indochinese in several large cities.[19] Because many Asian American groups include a high proportion of recent immigrants, their household composition is different from that of white Americans. In 1980, even among the longest established Chinese and Japanese Americans, "other relatives" made up 8 and 5 percent of household members for the groups as a whole, compared to just 3 percent in white households. For Vietnamese, with the highest proportion of recent arrivals, the figure was 14 percent—higher than the 10 percent among blacks and 7 percent among Hispanics. It will be interesting to see from the 1990 census if Asian Americans' household patterns have drawn closer to the white pattern as their adaptation continues.

Education

Perhaps the most remarkable—and certainly the best publicized—characteristic of Asian Americans is their exceptional performance in the nation's schools and colleges. Ambitious Asian Americans are outperforming all other groups in education, the traditional American gateway to success. The media hail their feats: highest average scores of any ethnic group, including whites, on the math section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test for college entrance; nine of the 40 semifinalists in the Westinghouse Science Talent Search among highschoolers in 1984 and seven in 1985; 11 percent of Harvard's entering freshman class in 1984, 9 percent at Princeton, and 19 percent at the University of California at Berkeley and at Cal Tech.[20] The 1980 census recorded that 35 percent of adults age 25 and older in the six main Asian American groups had graduated from college, more than double the 17 percent of white adults.[21] An amazing 52 percent of adult Asian Indians in the U.S. are college graduates and more than one-third of Chinese and Filipinos. Census figures on high school completion and school enrollment also demonstrate Asian Americans' extraordinary commitment to economic advancement through education.

High school completion

The percentages of high school graduates among men and women aged 45-54 and those aged 25-29 in 1980 portray the educational progress that has been made in this century (Table 9). For example, among white men, the proportions who had completed high school were 69 percent in the older group and 87 percent in the younger group, and among black men the proportions rose from 43 percent to 74 percent.

Asian Americans as a whole were already at high school completion levels close to those of whites in the past, and more recently they have levels well above those of whites. Among the Japanese, for example, 88 percent of men aged 45-54 in 1980 had completed high school and the proportion was an even more impressive 96 percent for men

Table 9. High School Graduates Among White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American Adults: 1980

(Percent of persons aged 25-29 and 45-54 who had completed high school)

Population	Male		Female		Male-female difference (percentage points)	
	25-29	45-54	25-29	45-54	25-29	45-54
White	87.0	68.7	87.2	70.1	−0.2	−1.4
Black	73.8	42.9	76.5	45.9	−2.7	−3.0
Hispanic	58.4	38.4	59.2	35.5	−0.8	−2.9
Japanese	96.4	88.1	96.3	82.5	0.1	5.6
Chinese	90.2	68.7	87.4	57.7	2.8	11.0
Filipino	88.8	79.6	85.0	71.3	3.8	8.3
Korean	93.5	90.4	79.0	68.5	14.5	21.9
Asian Indian	93.5	86.1	87.9	62.0	5.6	24.1
Vietnamese	75.5	63.6	63.4	41.4	12.1	22.2

Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-D1-A, *Detailed Population Characteristics*, Table 262, and special unpublished tabulations of the Asian American population.

aged 25-29 in 1980. All the Asian American groups of men, except the Vietnamese, had high school completion rates at least as high or higher than whites among both the older and the younger groups. Compared to the white figure of 87 percent for men aged 25-29 in 1980, for example, the figures were 94 percent for Koreans and Asian Indians, 90 percent for Chinese, and 89 percent for Filipinos.

Another Asian American educational achievement is the narrowing of the gap between men and women in high school graduation. Korean and Vietnamese women aged 25-29 in 1980 still lagged well behind men, but for the other Asian American groups the male-female difference in high school completion approached that of whites—where women had a slight edge in this age group. The male-female difference was 5.6 percentage points for Asian Indians, 3.8 for Filipinos, 2.8 for Chinese, and virtually nil for Japanese (Table 9, second last column).

Of course, many Asian Americans are immigrants who received their schooling before they came to the U.S.; others immigrated to the U.S. with further schooling as an objective. U.S. census data alone are not enough to distinguish educational attainment among Asian Americans born in the U.S., those born abroad who completed their education in the U.S., and those both born and educated abroad. However, some idea of these differences can be gleaned from information from censuses in immigrants' home countries combined with U.S. census data.

We have done this for Filipinos and Koreans, two of the main immigrant groups. Table 10 shows the percentages who had completed high school among persons aged 25-29 as recorded in the 1980 censuses of both the U.S. and the origin countries. For immigrants enumerated in the U.S. census, we also have a breakdown by period of immigration: 1975-80 and 1960 or earlier. Most of those aged 25-29 who immigrated to the U.S. between 1975 and 1980 are likely to have completed high school before immigrating. Those who immigrated before 1960 were under age 10 at the time and if they finished high school, they must have done so in the U.S.

As expected, all men and women aged 25-29 in 1980 who had migrated from the Philippines or Korea to the U.S. were much better educated than those in the same age group who remained behind—by a wide margin. More remarkably, those who left in 1975-80 at age 20 or older, after their high school years, gen-

Table 10. High School Graduates Among Filipinos and Koreans Aged 25-29 in 1980, by Birthplace, Residence, and Period of Immigration

(Percent of persons who had completed high school)

Population	Male	Female
Filipinos/Philippines		
In Philippines in 1980	27.1	23.9
In the U.S. in 1980		
Born in the U.S.	89.7	90.0
Born in the Philippines		
Immigrated 1975-80 at ages 20-29	84.9	84.9
Immigrated 1960 or before at ages under 10	87.5	87.1
Koreans/Korea		
In Korea in 1980	53.7	36.1
In the U.S. in 1980		
Born in the U.S.	93.3	80.2
Born in Korea		
Immigrated 1975-80 at ages 20-29	93.6	70.6
Immigrated 1960 or before at ages under 10	99.9	92.9

Sources: U.S. data: Bureau of the Census, tabulations of the foreign-born population by country of birth, 1984, unpublished, and special unpublished tabulations of the Asian American population. Philippines and Korea data: 1980 census national summary tables.

erally had nearly as high a proportion who had completed high school as did Filipinos or Koreans who immigrated before age 10 or those born in the U.S. This pattern could well be true of other recent Asian American immigrants (except the second wave of less educated Indochinese refugees). If so, it means this country is receiving the best educated people of the sending countries and their inclusion in the U.S. population will help boost national educational levels. This pattern is the reverse of that for recent Hispanic adult immigrants and for European adult immigrants of the past and Asian immigrants of the 19th and early 20th centuries, who arrived with much less education than U.S. residents, on average.[22]

School enrollment

Every Asian American group has impressive school enrollment rates relative to U.S. whites as well as to blacks and Hispanics, according to the 1980 census (Table 11). By the later high school years, at ages 16 and 17, all Asian Americans are more likely than white Americans to be enrolled in school. While 89 percent of the white population aged 16 and 17 was in school in 1980, 96 percent of Japanese and Chinese American boys and girls of this age were enrolled, 95 percent of Koreans, and at least 90 percent of the other three major Asian groups.

By the years of college and graduate study, ages 20-24, the Asian American enrollment edge is far greater. Twenty-four percent of whites aged 20-24 were enrolled in school in 1980, but the proportions were 48 percent for Japanese and 60 percent for Chinese. At least 40 percent of Koreans, Asian Indians, and Vietnamese of this age were enrolled and even Filipinos, the Asian group with the lowest rate, 27 percent, were three percentage points ahead of whites.

It might be supposed that one reason for Asian Americans' high enrollment rates at ages 20-24 is the fact that many Asians come to the U.S. in order to study, particularly at college undergraduate and graduate levels, planning to return home after graduation, but in the meantime they are counted by the census as being residents of the U.S. and enrolled in school. However, our data indicate that enrollment rates for native-born Asian Americans aged 20-24 are also generally higher than that for whites of the same ages.[23]

Why are Asians able to do so well in school? Academic researchers and news reports suggest that the answer is strong parental pressure and support and a level of discipline that other ethnic groups lack. Asia expert John Whitmore of the University of Michigan observed to *U.S. News & World Report:* "If an Ameri-

Table 11. School Enrollment of Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian Americans Aged 16-17 and 20-24: 1980

Population	Percent enrolled in school	
	Aged 16-17	Aged 20-24
White	89.0	23.9
Black	87.9	21.1
Hispanic	80.2	18.2
Japanese	96.2	48.0
Chinese	96.0	59.8
Filipino	92.8	27.1
Korean	94.9	40.1
Asian Indian	92.2	44.5
Vietnamese	90.2	41.8

Source: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-C1, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Tables 123, 133, and 160.

can child isn't doing well in school, his parents think the teacher or school has failed or the student just doesn't have it. The Asian parent's view is that the student isn't trying hard enough. Put shoulder to wheel, and there will be a payoff."[24]

Reporting "remarkably" high school marks of children in a nationwide sample of 1,400 Southeast Asian refugee households that were followed for three years, psychologist Nathan Caplan, also of the University of Michigan, noted that the survey parents spent many evenings reading to their children in English or their native tongue to boost classroom achievement.[25]

Asian Americans' educational success is raising new questions for academia. Some top universities have reportedly adopted unofficial admission quotas for Asian Americans to dampen their disproportionately high representation in undergraduate student bodies.[26] This possibility alarms the Asian American community, of course, but it should be alarming to all Americans, whether or not it reaches the point of affecting Asian American educational performance. Universities that deny admission to qualified students simply because of Asian heritage are practicing a new kind of anti-Asian discrimination. In other forms, this discrimination has persisted since the arrival of the first Chinese laborers more than a century ago.

Whatever the obstacles, Asian Americans are likely to continue their remarkable educational record. This in turn means they should advance rapidly in income and occupational status in the coming years.

Asian Americans at Work

According to the 1980 census, Asian American men and women in almost all cases have labor force participation rates as high or higher than those of white men and women. In the week before the April 1 census, the percentage of white men age 16 and over who were working or looking for work (the labor force participation rate) was 76 percent. The rate for Asian American men was at least this high—and as high as 84 percent for Asian Indians—for all but Chinese, 74 percent, and Vietnamese, 65 percent.[27] For white women, the rate was 49 percent. Asian Indian women were one point below this, 47 percent, and Vietnamese women were the same, but the rate was much higher in the other four major groups: 55 percent for Korean women, 58 percent for Chinese, 59 percent for Japanese, and highest for Filipino women at 68 percent.

For Asian Americans, however, work force participation in 1980 varied with their immigration history and command of English. These differences were most apparent among women.

Labor force participation variations among women

Asian American women's labor force participation rates varied somewhat according to their family situation, although a majority in all categories were in the labor force (top panel of Table 12, page 28). Filipino women's rates were highest in virtually all these categories. This

Filipino women have the highest labor force participation rates of Asian American women.

could be because of Filipino families' particular need for workers; as noted later, Filipinos earned less than all but Vietnamese among full-time Asian American workers in 1979. Wives living with their husbands in 1980 (female spouses) were somewhat less likely to be working or looking for work than women recorded as female householders. Like American women in general, Asian American women's labor force participation is high even when they have children under 18 living at home.

Except among Asian Indians and Filipinos, native-born Asian American women are more likely to be in the labor force than the foreign-born, and women who were "abroad in 1975" (mainly post-1975 immigrants) had lower labor force participation rates than the foreign-born as a whole (middle panel of Table 12). For example, a high 68 percent of Japanese American women born in the U.S. were in the labor force in 1980, versus only 43 percent of those born abroad. For Asian Indian women, however, the rates were 29 percent for the native-born and 54 percent for the foreign-born, and for Filipino women, 65 percent for the native-born and 69 percent for the foreign-born. Many Asian Indian and Filipino women may have come to the U.S. to find work or expecting that it would be necessary to take a job, whereas relatively more of the Japanese, Chinese, and Korean immigrants have come as nonworking wives and have not

Table 12. Asian American Women's Labor Force Participation, by Family Situation, Nativity, and English Proficiency: 1980

(Percent of women age 16 and over who worked or looked for work in week before 1980 census)

Characteristics	Japanese	Chinese	Filipino	Korean	Asian Indian	Vietnamese
Female family householders	72.5	70.3	79.0	71.1	58.2	56.0
Female spouses of householders	55.9	61.2	71.9	56.2	51.9	52.7
In families with own children under 18	76.6	75.4	78.3	71.2	73.1	53.5
Female householders with no husband present	72.7	69.8	78.5	72.9	57.3	57.6
With own children under 18	77.8	76.3	77.2	73.6	74.9	56.6
Native-born	68.3	65.0	64.5	59.1	29.4	56.1
Foreign-born	42.7	56.0	68.8	54.8	53.6	48.7
Abroad in 1975	26.0	46.9	60.5	50.9	51.6	44.1
Speaks only English at home[a]	71.8	67.8	67.3	59.7	36.0	56.0
Speaks another language at home[a]	48.2	57.9	70.3	55.8	53.6	50.2
Speaks English "not well" or "not at all"	26.8	48.5	32.2	50.5	30.9	34.1

Source: Bureau of Census, special unpublished tabulations of the Asian American population.

[a]Data only for women age 18 and over.

yet attained the high labor force participation rates of their native-born counterparts. The relatively low labor force particpation rates of Vietnamese women reflect the fact that so many of them are post-1975 refugees who arrived particularly unprepared for the U.S. labor market.

The greatest differences in labor force participation reflect English-language ability. As might be expected, Asian American women who speak little English are much less likely to be in the labor force than those whose English is better. This difference is true of both men and women, although men's labor force participation rates were higher than women's in all cases in 1980. Of Japanese women who responded to the 1980 census that they spoke English "not well" or "not at all," only 27 percent were in the labor force, compared to 72 percent who spoke only English at home (bottom panel, Table 12). The differences were less for women of other Asian groups, but the substantial gaps suggest that not being able to communicate in English is among the greatest obstacles for Asian American immigrants and their descendants, as it has been for other immigrant groups in the past.

Unemployment

To judge from 1980 census data, unemployment rates of Asian American workers are generally below the rate for white Americans and far below the rate for blacks. The unemployment rate in the week before the census was 5.8 percent for white workers age 16 and over (men and women combined). The rates were at or below this level for workers in all the major Asian American groups except, as might be expected, Vietnamese, and even the Vietnamese unemployment rate of 8.2 percent was well below the black rate of 11.8 percent.[28]

Foreign-born Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, and Vietnamese had higher unemployment rates than their native-born counterparts, but the reverse was true for Filipinos and Asian Indians. For all but Japanese, jobless rates were higher among Asians who had immigrated after 1975 than they were for immigrants who had come earlier. However, even the highest unemployment rate among recent Asian immigrants—8.6 percent for Vietnamese—was substantially lower than the black rate.

Immigrant men's employment

On average, Asian American men immigrating to the U.S. clearly go through a period of struggle to establish themselves in a full-time job. While nearly all the foreign-born men of each Asian American group who were ready to work did so at some time during 1979 (the year measured for this information in the 1980 census), the share who worked for 50-52 weeks was much lower, and lower still for those who worked full-time throughout the year (Table 13, page 30).

For example, 98 percent of Chinese American men born in Taiwan or Hong Kong who wanted to work did work at some point in 1979, but only 55 percent worked for 50-52 weeks—a proportion lower than the comparable figure for white men, 67 percent, and for Hispanic men, 57 percent, and the same as the figure for black men. Just 48 percent of these Chinese American men worked full-time, all year round. The pattern was worse for Vietnamese and best for Asian Indians, but even among men born in India, only 67 percent worked full-time, year round.

Unemployment at some time during 1979 was relatively high among immigrant Asian American men, ranging from 14 percent of men born in Japan or India to 33 percent of the Vietnamese, who were primarily refugees newly arrived in America. About one in five men born in Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, or Korea faced unemployment at some point in 1979. This was below the 1979 unemployment rates for Hispanic men, 24 percent, and black men, 26 percent, but higher than the rate for white men, 17 percent.

Table 13. Employment Situation of White, Black, Hispanic, and Foreign-Born Asian American Men in 1979

Population	Percent of those in labor force who worked in 1979			Men in labor force who had some unemployment in 1979	
		Worked 50-52 weeks	Worked full-time for 50-52 weeks	Percent	Average weeks of unemployment
White	99.0	67.1	63.1	16.7	13.9
Black	95.5	55.4	51.3	26.1	17.8
Hispanic	97.6	57.0	54.0	23.9	14.4
Foreign-born Asian American men by country of birth					
Japan	98.9	64.1	59.2	13.5	11.7
Taiwan or Hong Kong	98.1	54.9	48.0	19.2	11.8
Philippines	98.1	59.8	56.3	18.9	13.3
Korea	98.7	54.6	50.2	21.4	10.6
India	99.0	70.0	67.0	14.4	11.5
Vietnam	93.4	46.7	43.1	32.6	13.5

Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-C1, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Tables 127 and 137, and unpublished tabulations of the foreign-born by place of birth.

The number of weeks the unemployed foreign-born Asian American men were out of work ranged from 11 to 14 weeks, an average of one-fifth to more than one-quarter of the entire year. For men who are the family's chief breadwinner, these statistics suggest a serious unemployment problem unrevealed by their general labor force participation averages.

Occupation

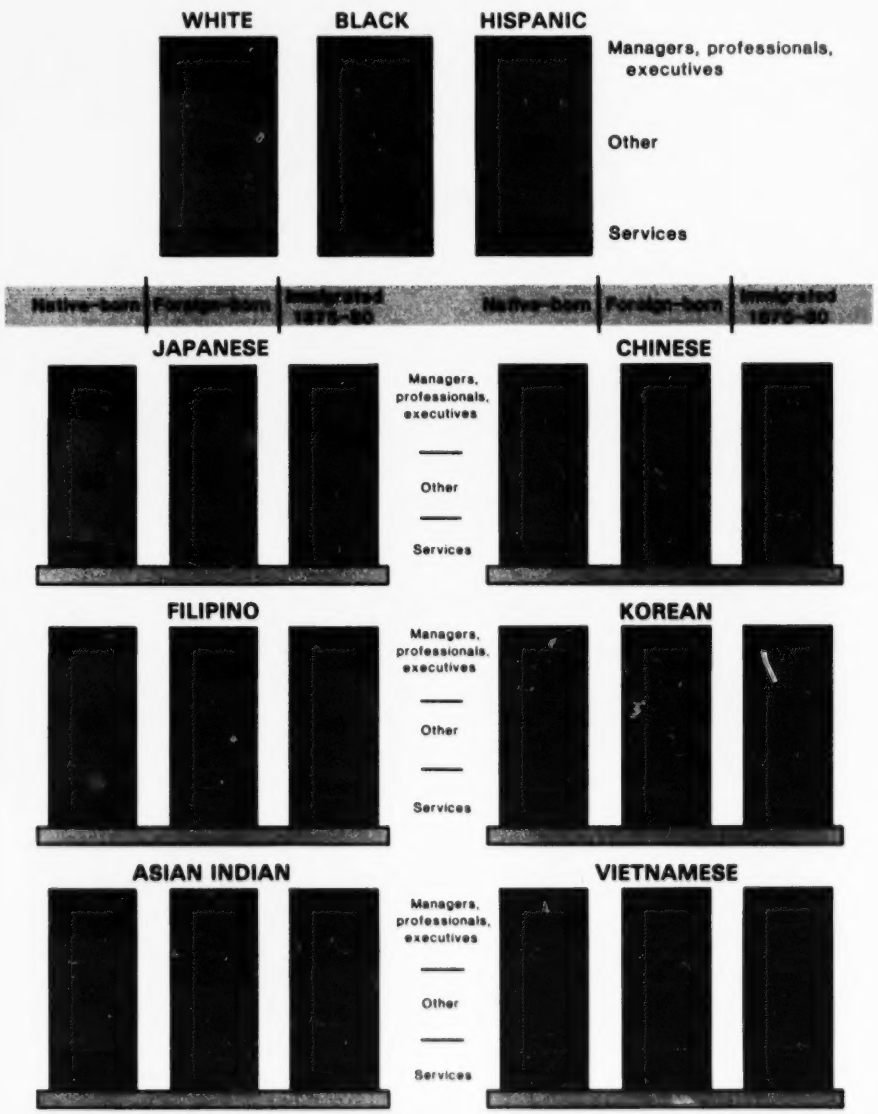
Native-born Asian Americans work in much the same occupations as white Americans. However, Asian American immigrants, the foreign-born, have a different pattern. Like other minorities and immigrants before them, they are found disproportionately in the low-paying service occupations. But they are also concentrated at the top of the occupational hierarchy in professional, managerial, and executive positions.[29]

For example, in 1980, 24 percent of employed white Americans (men and women combined) held jobs as managers, professionals, or executives, but the proportion of foreign-born Asian Americans in this high-status category was 26 percent for Filipinos, 28 percent for Japanese, 30 percent for Chinese, and an amazing 47 percent for Asian Indians (Figure 6). Only among foreign-born Koreans and Vietnamese were the figures lower than for whites. For Koreans, the explanation is that many have gone instead into commercial occupations—the well-known greengrocers of New York City and Los Angeles, for example. Koreans operate about 1,000 of New York City's 1,200 independent grocery stores.[30] For Vietnamese, the explanation is that most of the foreign-born came as refugees who, except for the first wave of 1975-77, generally were less educated farmers, fisherfolk, and laborers speaking little English. Except for the Vietnamese, the proportions of Asian American immigrants working as managers, professionals, or executives in 1980 were all far higher than the figures of just 14 percent for blacks and 12 percent for Hispanics.

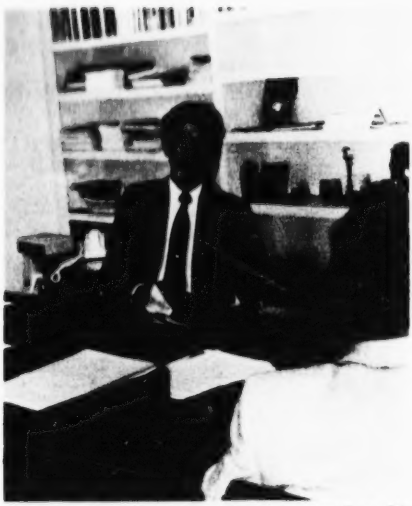
The most recently arrived immigrants who came in the five years before the 1980 census were somewhat less likely to be ranked at the top of the occupational ladder than the total immigrant populations, except among Japanese. This reflects the fact that newly arrived immigrants often must first take jobs for which they are overqualified. Lucie

Figure 6. Occupational Status of White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American Native-Born and Immigrant Workers: 1980

(Numbers in percent)



Sources: Bureau of the census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-C1, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Tables 89 and 135, and special unpublished tabulations of the Asian American population.



Japanese Americans born abroad, as well as Filipinos and Asian Indians, are more likely than both their U.S.-born counterparts and white Americans to work in the top-ranked occupations.

Cheng, director of the Asian American Studies Center at the University of California, Los Angeles, found, for example, that newly arrived Asian American physicians, pharmacists, and nurses in California frequently worked as interns, assistants, and laboratory technicians.[31] This was because of language problems, differing professional standards in the U.S., and also some discrimination.

Among Japanese, Filipino, and Asian Indian immigrants, the proportions in the highest occupational category in 1980 not only exceeded the white figure but also the proportions for the U.S.-born workers in these groups. For most recent Asian immigrants, the old U.S. image of immigrants filling only the lowest rungs on the occupational ladder no longer applies.

The success of Asian American immigrants at moving beyond low-paying occupations to better-paying high-status jobs is likely to provoke objections among black leaders, who may see the black population once again being left behind.[32] In 1980 the proportion of black workers in service jobs, 23 percent, was nearly three times that of Asian Indians born abroad, 8 percent, and above that of Chinese foreign-born, 22 percent, which was the highest figure in service jobs among foreign-born Asians. Asian Americans' occupational gains will not come without inviting the resentment of groups that have not been so successful.

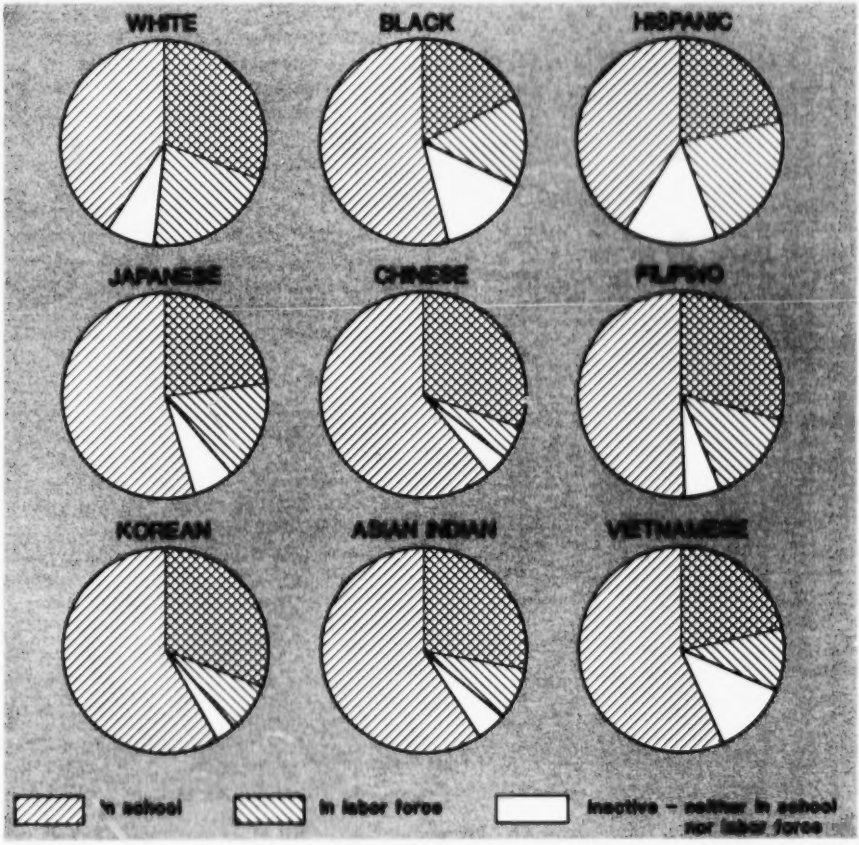
Asian Youth

Many media stories hailing the energy and drive of Asian American immigrants single out Asian American youth in particular. In contrast to white youth, Asian Americans are intent on achieving at school or getting ahead in the labor force, the articles say. The popular impression is that idleness is relatively rare among Asian American youth because of their strong family ties and parental authority. These are also cited as the major reasons for Asians' low rates of juvenile delinquency.

Statistics from the 1980 census support these views (Figure 7). Asian American youth born abroad are indeed less likely to be inactive—neither in school nor in the work force—than other American youth, particularly blacks and Hispanics. Because young Asian immigrants have such high rates of school enrollment, however, their labor force participation rates are somewhat lower than the rate for white youth, but still at least as high as the rate for blacks.

In 1980, 72 percent of white boys and girls aged 16-19 were in school and 52 percent were in the labor force; 31 percent were in both categories. Some 8 percent were neither in school nor in the labor force. Youth of the same ages born in Korea had a much higher share attending school, 89 percent, while only 38 percent were working or looking for work. Just 3 percent were inactive. The pattern was similar for other foreign-born Asian youth. Only Vietnamese-born youth had a higher rate of inactivity than whites, 12 percent, probably because so many of them were recent arrivals who had yet to

Figure 7. Activity Status of White, Black,, Hispanic, and Asian American Foreign-Born Youth Aged 16-19: 1980



Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-C1, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Tables 123 and 133, and unpublished tabulations of the foreign-born by country of birth.

take advantage of educational opportunities or find jobs. Even so, 78 percent of these Vietnamese youth were attending school, and their inactivity rate—like those of all other Asian groups—was below the inactivity rates for black youth, 14 percent, and Hispanics, 15 percent.

These findings support the notion that Asian American families believe in education for their children and are willing to support them while they add as much as possible to their educational credentials. This and Asian young people's apparent industriousness should stand them in good stead as they compete for jobs in America.

Income and Poverty

As widely reported in the press, the 1980 census revealed that median family income in 1979 for Asian Americans—$23,600 for the six groups making up 95 percent of Asian Americans—exceeded

Table 14. White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American Worker Incomes and Family Poverty Levels in 1979

Population	Median income of a full-time worker	Percent of families below poverty level
White	$15,572	7.0
Black	11,327	26.5
Hispanic	11,650	21.3
Asian Americans by ethnic group		
Japanese	16,829	4.2
Chinese	15,753	10.5
Filipino	13,690	6.2
Korean	14,224	13.1
Asian Indian	18,707	7.4
Vietnamese	11,641	35.1
Foreign-born Asian Americans by country of birth		
Japan, total	9,937	5.6
Immigrated 1975-80	9,444	10.1
Immigrated 1970-74	9,946	6.2
Immigrated before 1970	9,986	4.3
Taiwan or Hong Kong, total	11,818	11.8
Immigrated 1975-80	9,676	22.8
Immigrated 1970-74	12,392	6.1
Immigrated before 1970	13,692	2.8
Philippines, total	12,715	5.3
Immigrated 1975-80	10,069	8.8
Immigrated 1970-74	13,110	3.8
Immigrated before 1970	14,037	4.6
Korea, total	9,589	7.9
Immigrated 1975-80	8,250	11.1
Immigrated 1970-74	9,814	6.6
Immigrated before 1970	11,698	4.0
India, total	13,138	5.0
Immigrated 1975-80	10,968	10.7
Immigrated 1970-74	14,140	3.2
Immigrated before 1970	15,015	2.2
Vietnam, total	9,256	30.3
Immigrated 1975-80	9,179	35.7
Immigrated 1970-74	8,866	8.7
Immigrated before 1970	12,120	6.8

Sources: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-C1, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Tables 148, 149, 158, 159, 164, and 165, and unpublished tabulations of the foreign-born by place of birth.

that not only of American families in general ($19,900), but also the level reported by white families ($20,800). The white median was topped by the Japanese ($27,350), Asian Indians ($24,990), Filipinos ($23,690), and Chinese ($22,560), and barely trailed by Koreans ($20,460). Among the six major Asian groups, only the Vietnamese ($12,840) fell below the white and national medians.[33]

These family statistics are misleading, however. The Asian American edge has much to do with the way Asian American immigrants have mobilized living arrangements and higher labor force participation to produce more workers per household. In 1980, 63 percent of family households headed by an Asian American contained two workers or more, and 17 percent had at least three. For whites, the comparable shares were 55 percent and 12 percent.[34] The census statistics on incomes *per worker* show that not all Asian American groups enjoy relatively high incomes. Moreover, within each of the Asian American groups, the foreign-born and particularly the latest immigrants have relatively low incomes.

The 1979 median annual incomes of full-time Asian American workers ranged from as high as $18,707 for Asian Indians to lows of $13,690 for Filipinos and $11,641 for Vietnamese (Table 14, data by ethnic group). Only Japanese, Chinese, and Asian Indian workers had median incomes above that of white full-time workers, $15,572. Filipinos, Koreans, and Vietnamese were below the white median. The incomes of foreign-born Asian American workers as a whole were below the general medians for full-time workers in all the ethnic groups, and the medians for the most recent immigrants, arriving in 1975-80, were lower than those of immigrants who arrived earlier (Table 14, data for foreign-born Asian Americans).

The importance of family and household living arrangements for the economic adjustment of Asian American immigrants is clear when we consider the percentages of families with incomes below the poverty level in 1979. Here the foreign-born do well relative to the groups as a whole. The percentages of families with foreign-born householders that were classified as poor in 1979 were lower than the overall percentages for the ethnic groups for all but those with a householder born in Japan, Taiwan, or Hong Kong. However, poverty was relatively high for the most recently arrived

immigrant families, reflecting the problems some Asian immigrants have in finding work when they first arrive. For families headed by immigrants arriving 1975-80 who were born in Taiwan or Hong Kong, the proportion below the poverty level was 23 percent—more than triple the white figure of 7 percent, though still below the black figure of 27 percent. For the latest arrived Vietnamese families, the figure was 36 percent.

Even this 36 percent poverty figure of 1979 for Vietnamese families who arrived after 1975 considerably understates the economic and social problems that recent Indochinese refugees face. Over 400,000 Indochinese have arrived since the April 1, 1980, census enumeration and in comparison with the earliest group of refugees, these "second-wave" arrivals—many of them "boat people"—are less proficient in English, less educated, less experienced at holding jobs in urban occupations, and generally less familiar with Western culture. A survey in five areas across the country of 1,384 Indochinese households who had arrived in the four years 1978 through 1981 found that on arrival, nearly two-thirds of the adults could speak no English, 20 percent knew "hardly" any English, and only 17 percent had "some proficiency" in English.[35] By the time of the survey in 1982, however, 40 percent of adults were attending classes in English as a second language, and more than two-thirds of adults had had such instruction. Two-thirds of the households were below the poverty level after one year in the U.S., a figure that was still 30 percent after almost four years.

Are Asian Americans a Burden?

Data from the 1980 census indicate that Asian Americans are very little burden on state and federal public assistance resources—a concern often voiced about immigrants from any source. The census asked questions about sources of income in 1979, distinguishing household income from earnings and investments and income from government "transfers." Table 15 shows findings on households with no income from earnings (wages, salaries, or self-employment income) and households receiving two kinds of transfer payments from the government—income from public assistance (welfare) programs for the poor and Social Security for the retired elderly who have worked in the U.S. and paid Social Security during their working years. Although these data do not allow us to look separately at recent immigrants, they do provide an interesting comparison among Asian Americans and with white, black, and Hispanic households.

Table 15. White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American Reliance on Public Assistance and Social Security in 1979

Population	Percent of households with no income from own earnings[a]	Percent of households with any income from Public Assistance[b]	Percent of households with any income from Social Security[c]
White	18.4	5.9	26.8
Black	23.4	22.3	23.1
Hispanic	15.7	15.9	14.6
Japanese	9.5	4.2	18.5
Chinese	10.2	6.6	13.9
Filipino	7.0	10.0	16.1
Korean	8.1	6.2	5.7
Asian Indian	16.3	4.5	16.9
Vietnamese	20.1	28.1	5.2

Source: Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-C1, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Tables 128, 138, and 164.

[a]Wages, salaries, and self-employment income.
[b]Aid to Families with Dependent Children, General Assistance, and Supplementary Security Income for low-income elderly, blind, or disabled persons.
[c]Social Security for retired workers and their survivors, permanent disability insurance, and railroad retirement payments.

Keeping in mind that the patterns shown in Table 15 combine the effects of age composition of household members, economic need, and willingness to apply for public assistance, one cannot help but be struck by the low proportions of

Asian American households that have no income from earnings and the low proportions with any income from public assistance. Asian American households operate in the main on a pay-as-you-go basis. The contrast with black and Hispanic households is marked. (One reason for the low public assistance figures for Asian American households may be reluctance to admit to dependence on welfare. A recent survey of elderly Koreans in New York City reported this as one of the many problems in trying to obtain data on this group.[36])

Japanese, Filipino, and Asian Indian households were more likely than other Asian American households to report some Social Security income for 1979. These households probably included more elderly survivors of immigration earlier in the century. This Asian American demand on government transfer payments will increase as more Asian American workers reach retirement age.

As might be expected, Vietnamese reliance on public assistance exceeded even that of blacks in 1979; 28 percent of Vietnamese households received public assistance, compared to 22 percent of black households and 16 percent of Hispanic households.

As with poverty figures, the 1980 census findings on public assistance understate the plight of the most recently arrived Indochinese refugees. The 1982 survey of refugee families who had arrived from 1978 through 1981 reported: "Virtually all Southeast Asian refugees begin their American lives on welfare."[37] At the time of the survey, 65 percent of the households were receiving some public assistance and the figure was still at 50 percent for those in the U.S. for 40 months or more. Unemployment was 86 percent among adults in these households soon after arrival and still 30 percent after nearly four years in the U.S. Although this latter figure is high, the shift toward employment and away from public assistance shows that Indochinese refugees are prepared to do whatever is required to achieve self-sufficiency.

The central role of the household is evident. The survey found that the key point at which these households became self-sufficient was when a second family member found a job. The percentages of households with two or more workers increased as time went on and among these households, only 7 percent were below the poverty level. As with other Asian American groups, it is households functioning as income-generating units that permit even the most disadvantaged immigrants to begin the climb up the American ladder.

Future Prospects and Issues

Numbers in 2000

For the immediate future, immigration will continue to be the most important influence on the size and characteristics of America's Asian population. If present immigration trends continue, Asian Americans will expand their share of the total U.S. population.

Among the Asians, the Japanese are likely to become a decreasing proportion, because Japan is now sending relatively few immigrants—an average of just 4,000 a year since 1980[38]—and because Japanese American fertility is low. The share of Filipinos and Koreans should increase, because their immigration levels are now high—over 43,000 a year since 1980 from the Philippines and over 32,000 a year from Korea.

Most likely to increase is the share of Vietnamese, because of both relatively high fertility and immigration. Although refugees from Southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam, have been a dominant source of recent Asian immigration to the U.S., the flow of refugees will surely diminish over time. However, a steady stream of immigrants from Southeast Asia and especially Vietnam is likely to continue as refugees already in the U.S. acquire permanent resident (immigrant) status and are able to bring in family

Table 16. Asian American Population: 1980 and Projected for 1990 and 2000

Rank	1980			1990			2000		
	Ethnic group	Number	Percent	Ethnic group	Number	Percent	Ethnic group	Number	Percent
	Total	3,466,421	100.0	Total	6,533,608	100.0	Total	9,850,364	100.0
1	Chinese	812,178	23.4	Filipino	1,405,146	21.5	Filipino	2,070,571	21.0
2	Filipino	781,894	22.6	Chinese	1,259,038	19.3	Chinese	1,683,537	17.1
3	Japanese	716,331	20.7	Vietnamese	859,638	13.2	Vietnamese	1,574,385	16.0
4	Asian Indian	387,223	11.2	Korean	814,495	12.5	Korean	1,320,759	13.4
5	Korean	357,393	10.3	Japanese	804,535	12.3	Asian Indian	1,006,305	10.2
6	Vietnamese	245,025	7.1	Asian Indian	684,339	10.5	Japanese	856,619	8.7
	Other Asian	166,377	4.8	Other Asian	706,417	10.8	Other Asian	1,338,188	13.6

Source: Leon F. Bouvier and Anthony Agresta, "Projections of the Asian American Population, 1980-2030," in James T. Fawcett and Benjamin Cariño (eds.), *Asian and Pacific Immigration to the United States*, forthcoming.

members high on the preference list for 20,000-per-country annual quotas and then later, as U.S. citizens, can bring in immediate family members under the numerically unlimited category. For Vietnam, these numbers could be high if relations with Vietnam are regularized and the Orderly Departure Program, which has been permitting several thousand immigrants from Vietnam to enter the U.S. each year, is replaced with regular immigration coming under current U.S. law.[39] Immigration from Kampuchea could also be high if diplomatic relations are resumed with Kampuchea and the current difficulties in immigration from that country are removed.

Projections of the future size of the Asian American population are particularly risky because U.S. immigration policy is so important in determining that size and this policy may well change. The continuing efforts to change existing immigration law, while not prompted by the recent high level of Asian immigration, could, if successful, have a marked effect on that flow. For example, the flow would decrease if the system of preferences and emphasis on family reunification were changed and a cap put on the now unlimited category of immediate family members of U.S. citizens. On the other hand, some national flows might be increased by law changes. In 1981, for example, the annual 20,000-per-country quota for immigrants from "China" was changed to apply separately for the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, resulting in an increase in immigrants from the two countries from 25,800 in fiscal year 1981 to 35,800 in fiscal year 1984.[40]

In addition, the ebb and flow of Asian immigrants are intimately tied to political and economic trends in the countries of origin. Here the uncertainties abound: the effect of Hong Kong's reversion to Mainland Chinese authority in 1997, the political fates of Taiwan and the Philippines, the future attitude of the People's Republic of China concerning emigration from that vast pool, as well as what happens in Vietnam and Kampuchea.

For all these reasons, projections based simply on the assumption that today's flows will continue unchanged are likely to be inaccurate, just as projections of the Asian American population made 20 years ago would have been wrong because few people would have predicted the impact of the 1965 immigration law changes and the outcome of the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, with due caveats, Table 16 presents projections of the Asian American population, at least to the year 2000, prepared by Population Reference Bureau demographers Leon Bouvier and Anthony Agresta.

The assumptions of these projections—part of a longer-term set of projections—are: Life expectancy at birth in all groups rises from 69 for males and 76 for females in 1980 to 76 for males and 82 for females in 2010; fertility starts in 1980 at 3.0 births per woman for Vietnamese in the U.S. in 1980, 1.6 for Japa-

nese, 1.8 for the other four main ethnic groups, and is slightly higher for post-1980 immigrants in all six groups, and all fertility rates converge at 1.8 births per woman in 2010; and immigration is 240,000 annually—about the actual annual average for Asians in 1980-84—divided between the different groups about as immigrants were in 1980-84.

The projections show a near-tripling in the Asian American population in the 20 years from 1980 to 2000, from just under 3.5 million to almost 10 million. In 2000, according to these projections, Asian Americans will comprise almost 4 percent of the U.S. population (projected to be about 268 million in 2000), up from 1.5 percent in 1980. By 1990 Filipinos will long have surpassed Chinese as the largest Asian American group, and Koreans, and especially Vietnamese, will have caught up to the Japanese, who as recently as 1970 were the largest Asian group in the U.S. In 2000 the Japanese are projected to be the smallest of the six major Asian American ethnic groups and the Vietnamese are projected to be in third place, up from sixth place in 1980.

Geographic dispersal

While Asian Americans today are heavily concentrated in a few states, geographic dispersal has been under way for some time and we can expect this trend to continue. Unlike the U.S. population as a whole, the proportion of Asian Americans in the West is falling and rising in the other three regions. Like other Americans, however, Asian Americans are moving toward the largest urban centers. Already there are dynamic Asian American communities in virtually all U.S. cities, and these communities are sure to grow and become increasingly visible in the years to come.

The geographic spread of Asians throughout America is likely both to diminish the cultural difference between Asian Americans and other Americans and to make Asian cultures more familiar to Americans. This country absorbs the cultures of its new residents, and they in turn contribute to the prevailing scene. These processes are already under way in many Pacific and Atlantic coastal cities and over time are likely to be found in cities and towns throughout the country.

Minority group or assimilation?

Although the fertility and mortality patterns of all but the latest arrived of Asian Americans already resemble those of white Americans, the age and sex characteristics of Asian Americans as a whole are unlikely to resemble those of the total population for years to come because of the continuing influence of immigration. Because immigrants are usually young adults in their family-formation years, Asian American households on average will continue to have proportionately more children than white households. However, one might predict that as immigrants become a smaller share of the total Asian American population, average household size will decline; households will contain fewer children and fewer relatives beyond the immediate family should be needed to make ends meet.

Asians' commitment to education should continue to boost their job status and income levels. Rising educational levels in the general population are associated with rising incomes and higher job status. And as the children of today's Asian American immigrants move through the educational system, the assimilation process should work to impart those values and views that are distinctly American. Thus, their children in turn will be less Asian than American.

This is a process that has occurred again and again through almost two centuries of heavy immigration into this country. But Asian American immigration introduces some novel elements. Foremost is the fact that Asians are not white. This nation has never, until perhaps now, admitted a nonwhite race to full parity with the white majority. The long-

established Chinese and Japanese Americans seem already to have succeeded in breaking this barrier. Whether recently arrived Korean, Filipino, Asian Indian, and Indochinese immigrants have the same success remains to be seen.

In the past, Americanization has involved the absorption of values relating to schooling and work which encourage both individual success and national productivity. But the Americanization of Asian immigrants may have the opposite effect—reducing their exceptionally high level of dedication to learning and work.

For all the talk of a "model minority" and the pictures drawn in the press of a single monolithic Asian American minority group, we have found that Asian Americans are not homogeneous. Their demographic characteristics differ markedly: They have different age, fertility, and mortality patterns. Their family structures, employment patterns, occupations, incomes, and poverty levels are different. This is true among the different Asian American groups and within them as well. There are rich and poor Chinese, rich and poor Filipinos, rich and poor immigrants.

Especially important to note in this regard is the case of the Vietnamese and of Indochinese more generally. These most recent Asians to arrive in America have come for different reasons and from different circumstances than any other of the Asian immigrants and they will continue to exhibit singular characteristics for a long time to come. Even within the Indochinese groups there are marked differences in educational and occupational background between the first and second waves of refugees.

Third-generation Asian Americans

A major emphasis of this *Bulletin* has been on immigrants. This is inevitable, given the fact that such a large proportion of the current Asian American population is foreign-born. However, whether immigration continues at recent levels or not, it is certain that as the years pass more of the growing Asian American population of the U.S. will be native-born. Just as is true for Japanese today, the majority of all groups will eventually be natives of this country—second- , third- , or higher-generation Americans.

A second-generation Korean American joins the baseball team.

What does this mean for the future? It is not easy to say, but we know from the experience of the earlier European immigrants that separate groups lose their unique characteristics as the generations pass. People may know their ancestry, but they also consider themselves "American." The country still has ethnic European areas with distinctive shops, dress, and even language, but these tend to lose their enclave character as time passes. The United States has never been a "melting pot" where all people, regardless of ancestry, become exactly alike, but it *has* tended to become a "stew," where there are some differences but more often similarities of values and behavior.

Very often this comes about through intermarriage. Marriage out of a particular ethnic group guarantees that it will lose some of its insularity, and outmarriage is a time-honored tradition in the U.S. This is true—and will be true—of

A Chinese American father and son in San Francisco.

Americans with Asian roots. Hawaii may serve as a model of the future. There, intermarriage among the various Asian, Pacific Island, and white groups has been occurring for generations. The result is a population with a significant share of people not "purely" of any one ethnic or racial group and analysts are hard put to describe the state's ethnic composition.

Television and language

Another important factor in the U.S. today is the growing commonality of forces which homogenize the culture of the nation. The pervading influence of television is perhaps the prime example. It is hard for a group to maintain a unique set of values and behavior when the children are exposed to the common culture that television portrays.

Some groups, such as the Mennonites, go to great lengths to maintain their own cultures and to insulate themselves from broader forces, but they are exceptions. Among Asian Americans, no group seems to have made a conscious effort to retain its ancestral identity, with perhaps the partial exception of one of the newest groups, the Hmongs—a tribe from the northern hills of Laos. Rather, we see the retention of certain cultural traits, foods, and traditions, but also the absorption of many "American" behaviors and beliefs.

Language is another issue. There are strong sentiments today about whether the U.S. should be a monolingual or multilingual nation. It is not the speakers of Asian languages which have precipitated this controversy, however, but primarily the large numbers of Spanish-speaking Hispanics. Proponents of "English as the language of the United States" argue that there can be no true national unit without a common language. The image of a nation split linguistically like Canada is a constant specter.

It seems unlikely that a persistent non-English-speaking Asian community will form in the U.S. If past experience is a guide, the Asian American belief in education and drive for achievement will result in a determined effort to learn Eng-

lish, the language needed for success in this country. It is true that there are urban pockets where one or another Asian language is spoken almost exclusively: Chinatowns in New York and San Francisco, for example, and the growing Korean community in Los Angeles. But these areas are composed mainly of recent immigrants; it is unlikely that their descendants will be anything but fluent in English.

Whether assimilation is "good" or "bad"—and how much is good or bad—is not the issue here. The United States has from its beginnings absorbed immense numbers of natives from many lands, and whether or not they have all "assimilated," the country and its citizens have flourished. Asian Americans are but the latest in a long line of immigrants, and their contributions and achievements will be added to those of their predecessors.□

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